

Tax Relief

This session, Governor Hogan and the leaders of the General Assembly agreed to a substantial package of tax cuts totaling approximately \$350 million per year.

As part of this package, **Senate Bill 405** implements a tax credit for Marylanders 65 or over who make less than \$100,000 per year individually or less than \$150,000 jointly. The tax credit is \$1,000 individually or if only one of the individuals filing a joint return is eligible for the credit, and \$1,750 for joint filings. I have strongly supported delivering tax relief to our State's seniors during my time in the Senate and was proud to vote for and co-sponsor this legislation.

This tax relief package also included several bills that expand sales tax exemptions for child care and health care items. I voted for these bills to allow Marylanders to keep more of their hard earned money.

While these bills were successful, I believe that we could have done more to relieve the tax burden. For example, I co-sponsored bills that would have repealed the automatic annual gas tax increase and the State sales tax on digital products, also known as the "Netflix Tax." Unfortunately, these bills did not receive a vote and were unsuccessful this session. I will continue to support efforts to lower taxes in Maryland, and I intend to re-introduce two of my bills to lower taxes for our first responders.

Crime

I remain extremely concerned about the level of crime across Maryland. I supported a number of bills this session to address this important issue by co-sponsoring legislation that would have imposed more serious offenses on repeat violent offenders, made the theft of a firearm a felony, and to provide more transparency regarding sentences being handed down by judges in our State. Modified versions of some of these bills were able to pass the Senate this year. However, the House of Delegates did not move forward with these bills or any other legislation to provide a substantial response to rising crime in our State.

The General Assembly passed **Senate Bill 387**, which regulates "ghost guns" in Maryland. The legitimate concern was the ability of minors or violent individuals to purchase handgun kits online that could easily be assembled at home and used in violent activity. However, the bill as originally written would make collectors, gunsmiths, and craftsmen criminals. I worked to substantially amend the bill in committee to offer protections for law-abiding gun collectors and hobbyists. The bill as amended and passed does not ban these builds but rather requires that they be serialized. These amendments also removed provisions from the bill criminalizing the possession of material that can be used to construct a gun. The amendments also reduced the penalty for possession of an un-serialized firearm so that it would not be a disqualifying crime, and required that a person must know or reasonably should have known that the firearm was not imprinted with a serial number in order to be in violation of the law.

Abortion

The General Assembly considered two bills this year relating to abortion in Maryland. **House Bill 937** establishes the Abortion Care Clinical Training Program and Fund and requires the Governor to include \$3.5 million in the budget annually to fund the training program. The bill also removes the requirement that abortions be performed by a physician and would now allow for any "qualified provider" to perform

an abortion. Finally, the bill requires the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange to cover abortion care services without a deductible, coinsurance, copayment, or any other cost-sharing requirements. I strongly opposed this expansion of abortion in our State and voted against this bill. However, this bill passed both chambers of the General Assembly, and the Governor's veto was overridden before the end of session, allowing this bill to become law.

The second bill, **House Bill 1171**, would have added a "right to reproductive liberty" to the Maryland Constitution. While this amendment passed the House of Delegates, it was not considered by the Senate and did not pass this session.

Paid Family Leave Tax and Mandate

The General Assembly also passed **Senate Bill 275**, which creates a State-run insurance program for paid family leave to cover as much as 24 weeks of paid leave in a 12-month period. This program will be funded by a new \$1.6 billion payroll tax paid by employers and employees. This legislation not only imposes a new tax on Marylanders, it also imposes new mandates on our small businesses at a time when they are already struggling. I voted against this bill and to sustain the Governor's veto of this legislation. However, the veto was unfortunately overridden, and this bill will become law.

Legalization of Marijuana

The General Assembly passed two bills relating to the legalization of marijuana. **House Bill 1** creates a referendum for voters to approve an amendment to the Maryland Constitution legalizing recreational marijuana, and **House Bill 837** relates to the implementation of legalized marijuana if House Bill 1 is approved by the voters. This bill was amended by my Republican colleagues in Committee to add stricter penalties for smoking marijuana outside in public. I voted against both bills; the Constitutional amendment will be on your ballot in November.