



April 15, 2015

Dear Friend,

The 435th session of the Maryland General Assembly ended on April 13th at midnight after 90 days of intense work.

I was excited to have new responsibilities this year. I was appointed **Vice Chair of the Environment and Transportation Committee** and also served as Chair of the Subcommittee on Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Open Space. In the latter role, I worked with eight other delegates to examine the testimony and information submitted on more than 50 bills.



As always, I would like to thank everyone who emailed, wrote, or called to express your opinion on the many bills we considered this year. I would also like to thank the many constituents who visited Annapolis to share with me their points of view on legislation that was considered this year. It was a pleasure to work with the **District 11 legislative team** -- Senator Bobby Zirkin, Delegate Shelly Hettleman and Delegate Dan Morhaim.

My Legislation

HB 266—Pikesville Volunteer Fire Company

The bill that I was most proud of sought capital funding for the Pikesville Volunteer Fire Company (PVFC). PVFC is a critical resource for the health and safety of the greater Pikesville community. PVFC's volunteer firefighters respond to thousands of

fire and EMS calls each year; however, their existing firehouse does not meet their growing needs. In order to better serve the community, the company needs to expand its facilities to begin a live-in program, among other improvements. **House Bill 266** resulted in \$200,000 in capital funding to the company to support these renovations (with an additional \$50,000 in funding provided by the Senate).

HB 514—Commission on Climate Change

Climate change is one of the most significant environmental challenges that we face, as a state and a nation. With our extensive coastline, Maryland is very vulnerable to rising sea levels. Left unchecked, climate change will affect public health, agriculture, industry, and almost every economic sector in Maryland.

I introduced **House Bill 514** to create a Commission on Climate Change within the Maryland Department of the Environment to advise the Governor and General Assembly on ways to advance Maryland's policies and programs related to climate change. The Commission will include stakeholders representing diverse interests to develop a plan to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. I am very pleased that the legislature approved this bill.

HB 860--Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic invasive species (such as hydrilla, an underwater noxious weed) are degrading some of our lakes, especially Deep Creek Lake, impacting recreation, and raising public health and safety concerns. The Department of Natural Resources has implemented an expensive program to fight one type of invasive species in Deep Creek Lake, but there's more we can do to prevent the introduction of these invasive species. My **House Bill 860** does something very simple: it requires boat owners to properly clean their boats before placing them in State lakes. In addition, DNR will set up a workgroup to recommend other ways to reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species from boats placed in lakes. The legislature approved this bill.

HB 1042—Healthy Air for All Act

Millions of Marylanders breathe air that fails to meet the Environmental Protection Agency's air quality standard for smog. Hours after he was inaugurated, Governor Hogan stopped publication of the Maryland Department of the Environment's rules that would limit nitrogen oxide pollution from the state's coal-fired power plants. I introduced **House Bill 1042**, the Healthy Air for All Act, to codify these regulations that were developed following a 15-month stakeholder process. The bill would have required coal power plants to consistently operate their existing pollution controls; and those units lacking state-of-the-art controls would have had to upgrade their controls, repower to a clean fuel, or cease to operate by the end of the decade.

Unfortunately, the legislature did not approve this bill. Hopefully, the Governor will take action soon to address this issue. The "smog season" is almost upon us, and it is important to take steps to curb Central Maryland's smog pollution, which is the worst of any area east of the Mississippi River.

HB 153—Animal Tethering

We had one of the coldest winters on record this year. Just as such weather is unsafe for people, it is also unsafe for pets. Unfortunately, some dog owners leave their dogs tethered outside for too long in cold weather, so I introduced [House Bill 153](#). This bill would have prohibited anyone from keeping a dog tethered outside when it is very cold, very hot, or during a hazardous weather event. Current law prohibits a person from leaving a dog unattended and tethered in certain circumstances, such as unsanitary conditions or without access to clean water, but does not specifically address weather conditions. Unfortunately, HB 153 did not pass, but I will try again next year.

Major Legislative Issues

Fracking Moratorium

Hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") has been one of the most hotly debated issues in recent years. Fracking involves the injection of high-pressure water, together with sand and scores of chemicals, into shale to release natural gas.

Despite extensive study of the environmental impact of fracking, there has been a growing concern about the possible public health impact of fracking. New York State recently banned fracking because of public health concerns.

In response, the legislature passed a two-year moratorium on fracking in Maryland ([House Bill 449](#)). The moratorium, which I strongly supported, will allow us to continue to study this practice to ensure Maryland makes an informed decision that protects both its citizens and the environment. Hopefully, the Governor will sign this important bill.

Senator Bobby Zirkin's [Senate Bill 458](#) would have created strict liability for fracking operations. This would have provided important protections should fracking start in Maryland. The bill (which I supported) passed the Senate but unfortunately not the House.

The Stormwater Fee

Stormwater runoff carries fertilizer, pesticides, animal manure, sediment, and spilled oil and gasoline into the Chesapeake Bay. Stormwater runoff is the only source of Bay pollution that is increasing. The ten largest jurisdictions – including Baltimore County and Baltimore City– need to reduce their stormwater runoff to improve Bay water quality and comply with State pollution permits and the federal EPA mandate.

This session, we revisited the controversial stormwater management fee (also known as the "rain tax"), which was signed into law in 2012. In Baltimore County, projects funded by the fee include street sweeping, storm drain cleaning, stormwater facility inspection, maintenance and upgrades, shoreline stabilization, urban canopy tree planting, and reforestation - putting Baltimore County in the forefront of efforts to protect the Bay.

[Senate Bill 863](#) made several changes to the 2012 law. First, we repealed the mandated stormwater management fee by making it optional for the ten jurisdictions subject to the law. But, at the same time, we increased accountability for the pollution control efforts of these jurisdictions. They will have to show by 2018 that they have full funding for the stormwater reduction requirements that State permits require. If not, they will be subject to penalties. I was pleased to be part of the House workgroup that strengthened SB 863, which passed the House by a vote of 138 to 1.

The Budget

Education and Health Care

The legislature's FY 2016 budget is a responsible one. It meets the priorities of the people of Maryland without raising taxes or raiding funds. It reduces the structural deficit (the structural gap between revenues and spending) by almost 69%. The budget preserves a Rainy Day Fund balance of 5%, or \$814 million, and a general fund balance of \$30 million. The state retained its "Triple A" bond rating with all three major rating agencies, making Maryland 1 of only 10 states to do so.

Under the legislature's budget, state support for public schools will be almost \$6.2 billion and local aid for education will increase by \$138 million. Of this amount, more than \$120 million can only be released if the Governor authorizes it. This is because the Governor proposed a lower amount of education spending – not enough to keep up with the growing student population in Maryland – and under state law, the legislature cannot increase funding. Unfortunately, the Governor has indicated he will not release this funding for education and other important programs despite the General Assembly's support. If the Governor doesn't authorize this additional amount, it will revert to Maryland's bottom line.

I am proud that Maryland's ongoing commitment to expand Medicaid coverage under the federal Affordable Care Act has resulted in almost 1.2 million Marylanders having access to health care. Total funding for health care providers in the Medicaid program approaches \$9 billion. However, as introduced by the Governor, the FY 2016 budget reduced Medicaid provider reimbursements by \$625 million. The legislature mitigated some of these rate reductions to physicians, nursing homes, and community providers. It also maintained coverage to pregnant women and for family planning, coverage that was not funded in the Governor's budget. In addition, under the legislature's budget, funding for the developmentally disabled increases by over \$100 million. Finally, the legislature's budget allows the restoration of the modest 2% cost-of-living raise received by employees in January 2015, which was rescinded in the budget as introduced. However, as with the education funds, the Governor has threatened not to release funding to restore these cuts.

Capital Budget

The capital budget provides important funding for public schools and higher education:

- \$280 million to school systems to modernize classrooms.
- \$6.1 million to fund the Aging Schools Program (beneficial to Baltimore County which has one of the highest percentages of aging school buildings in the state).
- \$20 million in school construction funding for counties having to rely on portable classrooms due to significant enrollment growth.
- \$438 million for higher education needs, of which \$54.9 million is for community colleges.

Other Important Issues

Delegate Shelly Hettleman introduced [HB 571](#) to address sexual assault on university and college campuses. The new requirements will help schools know more about the prevalence of sexual assault on their campuses and whether their services are adequately addressing the issues, in addition to better connecting students with services.

Delegate Dan Morhaim sponsored [HB 216](#) to address hazards related to plastic "microbeads," tiny beads used in personal care products that are discharged into waterways and ingested by fish and other animals in the food chain. This bill phases out the manufacture and sale of personal-care products and over-the-counter drugs containing plastic microbeads.

* * * * *

I am grateful to be representing you in Annapolis and to be a part of the District 11 legislative team. Please contact me at (410) 841-3527 if I can ever be of assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dana Stein". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dana Stein

Delegate

Paid for by Friends of Dana Stein, Charles Spira, Treasurer

© 2011 DELEGATE DANA M. STEIN
DANA@DANASTEIN.COM