

GOVERNOR WES MOORE'S 2024 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

To win the decade, Maryland needs to win 2024. As our state continues to climb out of the pandemic period, the Moore/Miller administration is focused on bread and butter issues that affect Maryland families.

The Governor's Agenda aims to make Maryland's economy more competitive, keep our communities safe, expand opportunity and support Maryland families, and make Maryland a state that serves. The following is a brief summary of the Governor's Agenda for the 2024 session.

MAKING MARYLAND SAFER

The Victim Compensation Reform Act (SB 471, HB 575) will modernize Maryland's victims compensation reform program to make sure that victims of crime get the support they need to recover. It is far too difficult and takes far too long for crime victims to get the compensation they are entitled to, and this proposal would make the process more efficient, remove unnecessary barriers to receiving compensation, and allow for rapid awards for immediate needs like funeral or emergency relocation expenses. Victim's compensation is proven to both help families in their recovery from crimes and to prevent future crimes, and strong victim's compensation systems can make it more likely that victims of crime will be willing to testify against perpetrators of crime. This bill will have broad support from victim's advocates and state's attorneys.

The Growing Apprenticeships and the Public Safety Workforce (GAPS) Act (SB 470, HB 597) is focused on making sure that Maryland is training and supporting highly-qualified law enforcement professionals to protect our communities. Police Departments across the state are facing challenges hiring and retaining officers. The bill proposes both short and long term actions to help address this problem. First, it would reform an existing apprenticeship model for public safety officials with the goal of making apprenticeships a more viable pathway to law enforcement. Second, the bill would establish a commission to do a deep dive into policies that can help recruit, train, and retain the next generation of law enforcement officers. Finally, it would require the establishment of a model policy for law enforcement officer wellness programs in order to ensure police officers receive the support they need in their often challenging work.

The Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention (SB 475, HB 583) will be created within the Department of Health to consolidate and better coordinate our State's public health approach to preventing gun violence. Gun violence intervention programs were pioneered in Maryland, but there is more work to do to ensure that they are adequately funded and informed by the best available data. This new center within the Department of Health will serve as a partner to local governments, advocates, and medical professionals engaged in the work of hospital- and community-based violence intervention programs.



MAKING MARYLAND MORE AFFORDABLE

The ENOUGH Act (SB 482, HB 694) is a first-in-the-nation state level effort to end concentrated poverty. For too long, communities in Maryland have experienced multi-generational poverty and its consequences, which include higher rates of crime, less educational and economic opportunity, and decaying housing. Through place-based interventions in selected communities across the State, the ENOUGH initiative will give communities the support and resources they need to identify the root causes of poverty in their neighborhoods and begin to address them. Because poverty does not look the same in every neighborhood, ENOUGH communities will work with community organizations, non-profits, anchor institutions, and other key community members to build a locally-focused plan of action for addressing poverty. The Governor has set aside \$15 million in this year's budget to fund the initiative in its first year.

The Housing Expansion and Affordability Act (SB 484, HB 538) seeks to directly address Maryland's housing supply and affordability crisis to lower costs and expand economic opportunity for Marylanders across the state. This legislation will incentivize the construction of highly targeted new housing by removing barriers to development that have contributed to the current supply shortage. To do so, the bill seeks to modernize land use law and expedite and simplify approval for transit oriented development, development on former state-owned complexes, and housing development by 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations if certain affordability requirements are met. The legislation aims to incentivize the development of these projects by allowing for greater density when certain conditions are met.

The Housing and Community Development Financing Act (SB 483, HB 599) focuses on strengthening state financing tools for housing construction and community development investments. First, the bill will establish the Maryland Community Investment Corporation (MCIC) as a state Community Development Entity (CDE). Through its designation as a CDE, the MCIC will compete for tens of millions in federal funding through the New Market Tax Credit program. Upon award of federal funds, the MCIC will make investments in low-income communities and community development projects across the State. Second, the legislation seeks to strengthen the Strategic Demolition and Smart Growth Impact Fund by allowing for debt payments and credit enhancements to be covered for qualified projects. In all, this creates new tools for community development and economic development in high need communities.

The Renters' Rights Stabilization Act (SB 481, HB 693) addresses immediate needs of renters in the state who are experiencing housing instability. This omnibus bill seeks to: 1) Establish an Office of Tenant Rights in the Department of Housing and Community Development responsible for providing renters with information about their rights under law and creating a tenants bill of rights; 2) address the high eviction filing rate in the nation by increasing the eviction filing fee and preventing it from being passed on to renters; 3) reduce the allowable security deposit from two months rent to one month; 4) create a powerful new pathway to homeownership by creating a statewide right of first refusal, allowing renters the right to purchase their home if being sold; 5) modify the state's new rental voucher program to provide prioritization of vouchers for families with children under the age of five and for pregnant women.



Mental Health – Emergency Evaluation and Involuntary Admission Procedures and Assisted Outpatient Treatment Programs (The Behavioral Health Services Act) (SB 453, HB 576) is an omnibus behavioral health bill which will include a number of important reforms to help ensure that Marylanders who need behavioral health services are able to get them. The central component of the bill will be legalization of Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT), a process used in 47 other states to allow for court-ordered outpatient treatment for individuals with severe mental illness who are not compliant with treatment and whose lack of compliance poses a potential danger to themselves or others. In addition to AOT, the bill addresses peace officer emergency transport, scope of practice for psychiatric nurse practitioners, and required admission of emergency patients.

MAKING MARYLAND MORE COMPETITIVE

The Pava LaPere Legacy of Innovation Act (SB 473, HB 582) seeks to honor the life and legacy of Pava LaPere by investing in Maryland’s innovation economy and strengthen the opportunity for funding for the Baltimore Tech Hub. This legislation creates two new programs with the Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO): 1) The Pava LaPere Innovation Acceleration Grant Program to provide student tech startups with early stage capital and 2) the Baltimore Innovation Initiative (“BII”) seeks to provide access to capital and wraparound services for technology startups associated with colleges or universities located within the Baltimore Metropolitan-Statistical Area. These investments will help the Baltimore Tech Hub along with companies and researchers across the state compete for federal dollars and national prominence in artificial intelligence and biotech.

The Critical Infrastructure Streamlining Act (SB 474, HB 579) would remove barriers to the growth of Maryland’s technology infrastructure by streamlining the regulatory process for approval of industries that rely on backup power generators. Major 21st-century infrastructures such as data centers rely on backup power generation in case of power outages, and current Maryland law makes it difficult to get prompt approval for these generators. By simplifying the regulatory process, this bill will ensure that the growing technology industry, such as data centers, in the mid-Atlantic is located in Maryland and furthering Maryland’s regional competitiveness.

The Transparent Government Act (SB 472, HB 581) legislation is aimed at improving predictability for those seeking to build or grow businesses in Maryland. This bill will require all state agencies to establish and publicize projected timelines for licensing and permitting applications, and to share publicly whether they are meeting these timelines. Giving entrepreneurs a better sense of how quickly they can expect a response from state agencies will help them to better plan their business growth.

MAKING MARYLAND THE STATE THAT SERVES

The Maryland Road Worker Protection Act (SB 479, HB 513) implements the legislative recommendations of the Governor’s Work Zone Safety Work Group to protect Maryland road workers and initiate a culture change among motorists to adopt safer driving behaviors. The bill increases Maryland’s lowest-in-the-nation work zone automated speed enforcement fines from \$40 to \$290 to match the citation amount of a live officer stop. Repeat offenders with three or more citations would

face fines of up to \$1,000 for behavior that continually places road workers at risk. It also expands enforcement flexibility to remove the requirement that cameras be manned. The bill reinvests the revenue from work zone automated speed enforcement fines back into funding highway and work zone safety programs.

The Protecting Election Officials Act (SB 480, HB 585) is intended to help stop the epidemic of threats and harassment targeting election officials, which poses a fundamental threat to our State's ability to conduct free and fair elections. The bill would create a new misdemeanor charge in the Election Law Article for threats against election officials or their families. Because the new misdemeanor would be written into the Election Law Article, the crime would be prosecutable by either States' Attorneys offices or the Office of the State Prosecutor.

The Caring for Public Employees in Safety Professions (CAPES) Act (SB 476, HB 584) would expand workers compensation presumptions for firefighters to cover thyroid, colon, and ovarian cancers. There is growing scientific evidence that firefighters experience increased incidence of thyroid and colon cancers as a result of exposure to carcinogens in the normal course of their work. Due to the number of women who serve as firefighters it is difficult to provide accurate data regarding the impact ovarian cancer is having on firefighters. Current law identifies a number of cancers as preemptively occupationally related, including leukemia, prostate, rectal, throat, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, brain, testicular, bladder, kidney or renal cell, or breast cancers.

The Families Serve Act (SB 478, HB 604) seeks to support Maryland's military families by expanding job opportunities for military spouses. Military families make sacrifices to support the work of their service member spouses and parents, and ensuring that they are taken care of is both a moral imperative and a way to make Maryland a more friendly state to service members and military facilities. This bill would allow businesses and state government to provide hiring preference for military spouses, and thereby improve employment opportunities and economic opportunity for these families.

The Time to Serve Act (SB 477, HB 580) ensures that state employees who also serve in the National Guard and Reserves are fully supported by the State in both of their areas of service. Under current State policies, these individuals often have to use their personal leave for time they spend meeting their military service obligation, meaning that their personal leave is not available for other needs. The bill would expand military leave for these individuals to 30 days, in line with the extent of their military service obligations.

