

Dear Neighbor,

The Maryland General Assembly recently adjourned our 445th Legislative Session on April 10th and I am proud to present the work that was done over those 90 days on behalf of the residents of District 43A.

We began the Legislative Session in January along with the historic inaugurations of a new Attorney General, Comptroller, Governor and Lieutenant Governor. Their new administrations have each worked in true partnership with the General Assembly and I look forward to continuing that work in further sessions.

This year also marked the return to normalcy in the General Assembly in the post-COVID era and it was a relief to be meeting in person, while retaining the ability of witnesses to testify remotely if they chose.

In this end-of-session letter you will find updates on the legislation that I sponsored in my very first Legislative Session, Maryland's balanced budget, the \$300,000 in local bond initiative funding brought home to District 43A, and major legislation passed by the General Assembly. It is truly the honor of a lifetime to represent you with Delegate Regina T. Boyce in the Maryland House of Delegates. Thank you for your continued engagement, support, and counsel.

First Year Legislative Victories

Of the six pieces of legislation that I introduced, four passed and have been sent to the Governor's desk. I am incredibly proud of my first ever legislative package and you can find details on the specific bills below. The bills address public safety, education and career opportunities for young people, supporting our seniors, and preventing foreclosure.

Security Guard Agencies, Security Guard Employers, and Security Guards – Standards and Certifications (HB 1055/SB 760): Currently in Maryland, only a subset of private security guards are regulated at all and it is little more than a background check. This bill creates comprehensive oversight by the Maryland State Police with initial and ongoing training in things like appropriate use of force and de-escalation techniques and the requirement that use of force by a security guard be reported to State Police. Senator Jill Carter, who has been working on this issue for over fifteen years, sponsored the Senate version of this bill and it was an honor to work with her on this important effort.

Maryland Legal Services Corporation - Affordable Life, Wills, and Estate Planning for Seniors Program (HB 760/SB 351): This bill creates and funds a program to provide legal services to low-income seniors to help them navigate the many legal issues connected to aging. Senator Mary Washington sponsored the Senate version of this bill in

response to the great need in our District and across the State, and I was honored that she asked me to cross-file the House version.

Maryland Construction Education and Innovation Fund - Funding - Alteration (HB 1055/SB 922): This bill increases the annual funding for the Maryland Center for Construction Education and Innovation, which connects young people to training and jobs in skilled trades in the construction industry. The Center works closely with the Baltimore City School System and makes sure to reach women and other students who have not traditionally entered careers in the built environment. The industry has a growing and dire need for skilled workers in jobs that sustain families and build wealth and the Center is doing great work in bringing young people in.

Criminal Procedure - Violation of Pretrial or Posttrial Condition by Incarcerated Person - Victim Contact (HB 411/SB 487): This bill clarifies existing law to protect victims of sexual assault and domestic violence in cases where the defendant has been ordered to have no contact with them. As the law is currently written, it does not clearly apply if the defendant who has been ordered not to have contact, calls the victim from jail. This bill applies the law to contact from jail and allows the State to take action if a defendant who has been ordered not to make contact threatens a victim so they will not testify against them.

The pieces of legislation that did not pass are ***Foreclosure Actions - Responsibility of Secured Parties and Stay for Determination of Financial Assistance (HB 1223)*** and ***Recordation Tax - Purchase Money Mortgage or Purchase Money Deed of Trust - Extent of Exemption (HB 457/SB 65)***. I look forward to introducing similar legislation in further legislative sessions to protect local revenues and keep homeowners in their homes.

I was incredibly grateful to have the opportunity to cosponsor and support many important pieces of legislation this year. **Here is an overview of some of the most important issues that the Maryland General Assembly tackled in the 2023 Legislative Session.**

Reproductive Rights

After the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* last year, the General Assembly put forth a comprehensive legislative package to protect abortion in our state. I was a cosponsor of ***HB 705 Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Freedom*** which puts a constitutional amendment on the ballot in the November 2024 General Election. The amendment, if passed by voters, would enshrine in the Maryland Constitution that everyone has the right to reproductive freedom, bodily autonomy and access to abortion.

I also cosponsored ***HB 808/SB 859 Reproductive Health Protection Act***, which provides shield protections to providers and recipients of reproductive healthcare and abortions. It will protect people in Maryland from actions both civil and criminal originating in states that have banned abortion.

Recreational Cannabis

Voters made their voice heard last November when they voted to legalize recreational adult-use cannabis and the General Assembly has passed a regulatory and licensing regime in preparation for the July 1st enactment of legal cannabis. ***HB 556/SB 516 Cannabis Reform*** creates an equitable licensing, tax and regulation framework for the new cannabis industry and incorporates best practices from other states and lessons from the Maryland medical cannabis implementation.

Expanding Economic Opportunity

During the legislative session, I cosponsored many of the Governor's legislative priorities including those that enhance economic opportunities for Marylanders. ***SB 555 The Fair Wage Act*** sets the minimum wage at \$15 per hour beginning on January 1, 2024 instead of 2025. ***HB 547/SB 552 The Family Prosperity Act of 2023*** moves the state closer to its goal of eliminating childhood poverty by making permanent expansions to the state Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit that were originally enacted during the pandemic. I also supported the ***SB 551 Serving Every Region Through Vocational Exploration Act of 2023***, one of the pillars of the Governor's agenda, which creates a service-year option for high school graduates to work for community organizations and nonprofits.

Addressing the Climate Crisis, Protecting the Environment, and Building an Equitable Transit System

HB 843 Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force establishes the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force to study approaches to water and wastewater governance in the Baltimore region. The Task Force will report to the Mayor of Baltimore City, the County Executive of Baltimore County, the Governor, and the General Assembly. Access to clean, safe, and affordable drinking water is a human right recognized by the United Nations. Residents of the greater Baltimore region have worked hard and organized to protect their water infrastructure. This legislation is invaluable as we work to update our water and wastewater infrastructure and I was proud to cosponsor this legislation and see it passed.

Another piece of environmental legislation that passed and that I co-sponsored was ***HB 550 Maryland Energy Administration – Energy Programs – Modifications*** known as

the Clean Transportation and Energy Act. This bill would extend Maryland's Electric Vehicle Recharging Equipment Program through 2026 and repeal the cap on the number of rebates that can be issued to further entice consumers to purchase electric cars. It also requires the Governor, in each of fiscal years 2024 through 2027, to include in the annual budget bill an appropriation from the Strategic Investment Fund (SEIF) of at least \$10 million for grants under Medium-Duty and Heavy-Duty Zero-Emission Vehicle Grant Program.

HB 793/SB 781 Offshore Wind Energy – State Goals and Procurement (Promoting Offshore Wind Energy Resources Act) will invest in the construction of new off-shore wind turbine development and increase the amount of energy produced by offshore wind in the state to 8.5 gigawatts from the roughly two gigawatts under construction. A single gigawatt can power 750,000 homes, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. This important investment will help Maryland reach its goal of 100% renewable energy by 2035.

I was happy to see Governor Moore's administration's \$500 million investment in building an equitable transit system and the General Assembly passed some important pieces of legislation to help residents of our state access clean and green public transit.

HB 9 Transportation Equity requires the Maryland Transportation Plan to prioritize ways to achieve equity in transportation when developing overall transportation goals. The department will now be required to develop guidelines, equity analysis policies, and report on the impacts on riders with disabilities and minority groups who may be adversely affected by current transportation policies. This legislation was vetoed by former Governor Hogan last year.

HB 12 Equitable and Inclusive Transit-Oriented Development Enhancement Act furthers efforts to cut the cost of carbon emissions and address housing affordability and market expansion by prioritizing transit-oriented development (TOD). The bill establishes a \$5M Transit-Oriented Grant Program for local jurisdictions to aid in TOD design plans, public infrastructure improvements, and for private or public gap funding for development in a TOD. It also requires that TOD is a priority for the Department of Transportation's continued planning.

The Child Victims Act of 2023

After a multi-year effort, ***HB 1/SB 686 Civil Actions - Child Sexual Abuse - Definition, Damages, and Statute of Limitations (The Child Victims Act of 2023)***, finally passed this legislative session. This legislation allows for access to civil remedies for victims of sexual abuse that occurred while the victim was a minor at any time after the incident occurred, repealing the statute of limitations entirely. Currently, in civil cases a victim has until the age of 38 to bring forth a case for damages. However, cases of sexual abuse are

not typically reported immediately after they occur and many go years without being reported. This legislation allows sexual abuse victims to heal on their own terms and hold perpetrators to account and I was proud to have supported this important bill in committee and on the Floor.

Wear/Carry Permits and Gun Safety

The General Assembly passed three major pieces of legislation that would regulate wear-and-carry gun permits and require safe storage to keep our communities safe in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's *Bruen* decision. In June, the Supreme Court struck down a New York firearm law, similar to Maryland's law, which required a person applying for a permit to carry a handgun in public places to show proper cause. The Supreme Court said that states cannot require that a person who otherwise qualifies for a wear/carry permit also demonstrate a good reason for the permit. In the wake of the decision, Governor Hogan suspended Maryland's "good and substantial reason" requirement and the number of permits issued in 2023 after the decision exploded to a total of over 85,000 by the end of the year. By comparison, only 12,000 wear/carry permits were issued in 2022. ***SB 1 Criminal Law - Wearing, Carrying, or Transporting Firearms - Restrictions (Gun Safety Act of 2023)*** restricts where firearms can be carried in a public setting. ***HB0824 Public Safety - Regulated Firearms - Possession and Permits to Carry, Wear, and Transport a Handgun*** strengthens the restrictions and eligibility on those who can obtain a wear-and-carry permit and strengthen safe storage requirements. Additionally, ***HB 307/SB 858 Firearm Safety - Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention (Jaelynn's Law)*** strengthens storage requirements so that children and prohibited persons cannot access legally owned firearms.

Maryland's Balanced Budget

Every year the Maryland General Assembly is constitutionally obligated to pass a balanced budget. I am happy to report that the Fiscal Year 2024 budget is both balanced and addresses many important priorities - like funding of the Blueprint, increasing access to equitable transportation, increasing access to healthcare, and funding many important projects around our state and in District 43A. A budget is a reflection of our state's values and while not everything that we would have liked to fund is going to be funded at its desired level, I am proud of what the General Assembly has produced even with an unexpected budgetary shortfall.

The FY2024 Budget bill totals \$63.1 billion and includes \$900 million to the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Fund to cover implementation costs; reserves \$8.7 billion for public schools; includes \$386.5 million reserved for raising state employee salaries and other initiatives to facilitate recruitment and retention to rebuild our state government; provides a \$243.7 million increase in State support to Maryland's four-year public colleges and universities; funding to Medicaid totals \$14 billion, allowing the State to

provide coverage to over 1.5 million of our residents; \$78 million is provided for investments to strengthen the State's behavioral health system; appropriates \$167 million to improve State government cybersecurity; \$100 million in additional transportation funding, beyond the state's Transportation Trust Fund, targeted to support significant transit projects around the state, and more.

The FY2024 Capital Budget calls for record investment in school construction and school facility maintenance. The public school construction program is to receive almost \$190 million that will help us achieve a safe and healthy educational environment for every public school student in Maryland.

Morgan State University, located in District 43A, is set to receive over \$180 million in State funding, including \$60.6 million for the new Health and Human Services building. Additional project funding includes \$2 million appropriated for improvements to Baltimore's Penn Station; over \$64 million in grants for projects in the City; and over \$2,000 per capita returned in state aid to Baltimore City, totaling over \$1 billion. \$3.6 million was appropriated for organizations and business in Legislative Bond Initiatives (LBIs) in Baltimore City, \$300,000 of which was brought to District 43A. The LBIs in District 43A include \$100,000 for the Nexus-Woodbourne Family Healing - Youth Mental Health Residential Campus; \$100,000 for the Baltimore Safe Haven Expansion Project; and \$100,000 for the KidzStuff Child Care Center for Children with Disabilities. Additionally, Wide Angle Youth Media received \$500,000 for their new space in Remington, the Central Baltimore Partnership received \$1 million to address vacant buildings on Greenmount and North Avenues, the League for People with Disabilities received \$500,000, and \$40,000 was designated for traffic calming in Tuscany-Canterbury.


In Closing - Thank You

The adjourning, *sine die*, of the 2023 Legislative Session marks the end of my first session as your delegate. I am proud to have helped dozens of constituents navigate State Government, bring home much needed State investment into District 43A and Baltimore City, and I was happy to see that all of my legislation that passed received bipartisan support. A special thanks to my incredible team Jarid Matthews, Legislative Director and Joel Houlette law student extern, who made it all possible. I look forward to continuing to serve you.

Over the interim I will continue to host community events and town halls to remain as accessible as possible to you – and it would be my honor to join you at any community event, HOA, or PTA meeting in your community. In addition to community work I will also be developing my legislative agenda for the next session and welcome your suggestions.

Thank you for the privilege of representing you in the Maryland House of Delegates, it remains the honor of my life. If I or my staff can ever be of assistance to you, please do not hesitate to reach out by calling the office at (410) 841-3638 or by sending an email to elizabeth.embry@house.state.md.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Elizabeth Embry". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end of the name.

Elizabeth Embry
Delegate, District 43A