



## 2017 LEGISLATIVE SESSION BEGINS

Dear Friend,

January 11th marked the opening day of the 2017 Legislative Session and I am proud to return to Annapolis to represent you in the Maryland State Senate.

I continue to serve on the Senate Finance Committee, a committee with jurisdiction over a wide range of subject areas, including energy policy, economic development and health care. This year, the Senate President appointed me the new Chair of the Health Subcommittee on the Finance Committee. I am excited to take on this challenging role at a time when there is great uncertainty across the Nation about changes being proposed to our healthcare system and the impact this may have on our local laws and the State budget. My Subcommittee will grapple with finding solutions to allow access to affordable health care in response to any Federal action and will address proposed legislation in Annapolis dealing with prescription drug pricing and the growing scourge of opioid addiction. I remain in my role as Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Federal Relations, a House-Senate Committee which interacts with Maryland's Congressional delegation on a variety of Federal budget and policy issues impacting our State.

Please take a moment to review the highlights below and, as always, do not hesitate to contact me with your comments, questions or concerns at [brian.feldman@senate.state.md.us](mailto:brian.feldman@senate.state.md.us).

### **Maryland Economy**

Maryland's economy continues to outperform the Nation as a whole, with slow and steady gains. The State unemployment rate has inched down to 4.2%,

slightly below the National average of 4.7%. Maryland employers reported job growth over the last year in the areas of professional and business services, education and health services and the leisure and hospitality industry. The State and County are committed to retain our largest private sector employers. This was evidenced when Marriott decided to keep its worldwide corporate headquarters in Montgomery County.

In the biotechnology area, Maryland continues to be a noted international leader at the center of the mapping of the human genome and commercial applications. Information technology, telecommunications, aerospace, cybersecurity and defense are leading forces behind Maryland's economic growth. Additionally, Maryland has an emerging Clean Energy Sector, particularly in the solar industry where we saw a 42% increase in employment over the past year.

Maryland maintains its coveted **AAA bond rating** from all three credit rating agencies, an endorsement from Wall Street that the State has effectively managed its fiscal affairs. Maryland is one of only **ten** states in the Nation to maintain that top rating from Moody's, Fitch and Standard and Poor's.

### **Governor Hogan Proposes Fiscal Year 2018 Budget**

Unlike the Federal government, the Maryland Constitution requires the State to pass a balanced budget each year. Last week, Governor Hogan introduced a proposed \$43.5 billion budget for fiscal year 2018 (FY18) that the General Assembly is currently reviewing. The proposed budget increases spending by a half a billion dollars - a 1.1% increase. The good news is that direct aid to K-12 education increases, due to funding formulas and mandates created by the Legislature. Tuition is capped at 2% for our public universities and colleges, the same percentage as last year. However, Developmental Disability Administration provider rate increases are reduced by \$8.5 million and the six year Consolidated Transportation Plan has been reduced by \$1.5 billion due to lower than anticipated revenues flowing into our transportation trust fund.

### **Education**

Supporting our nationally recognized public education system is one of my highest priorities. We must continue to invest in our schools and our children's future.

*Education Week*, the Nation's leading education newspaper, ranked Maryland #5 in the U.S. Maryland still remains one of a small group of states that achieves top marks in nearly all categories, including academic achievement, school finance and the chance a child has for success. The one area where Maryland received below average grades is the wide achievement gap between low-income students and their more affluent peers. On that specific measure, the State ranked 42nd in the Nation.

*Education Week's* report is compiled from detailed data and analysis of the Editorial Projects in the Education Research Center.

On the funding front, I am pleased to note that, due to legislation that was passed in 2015, the Geographic Cost of Education Index, which directs additional dollars to those jurisdictions where education costs are higher, will be fully funded for FY18. Specifically, K-12 education has been budgeted for the full amount of \$6.4 billion. Montgomery County will receive \$687.9 million, an increase of \$23 million over last year. Additionally, \$26.8 million is allocated for local school construction projects in Montgomery County.

## **Feldman Agenda**

Below is a small sampling of the several dozen bills I will be introducing this Session.

I am the Senate sponsor for an important sexual assault bill, **Rape Survivor Family Protection Act**, which is designed to protect women from being required to have continued contact with their rapists when they become pregnant as a result of the rape. The legislation creates a civil judicial procedure to revoke the paternity rights of the assailant when a child is conceived due to 1st or 2nd degree rape or incest. For example, under current law, survivors can be forced to deal with their assailant prior to being allowed to put a child up for adoption. I look forward to collaborating with the House sponsor, Delegate Kathleen Dumais, the Maryland Coalition Against

Sexual Assault, the Woman's Law Center and the Maryland Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers to get this bill passed.

Because of a tragic occurrence that took place in my District, I am working with Delegate Aruna Miller to introduce legislation, **Firearm Disqualifications - Antique Firearm**, to eliminate a loophole in our gun laws which essentially exempts the purchase of antique guns from any regulation or background checks. Under the bill, "antique firearm" will be added to the definition of firearm. This loophole was highlighted in June, 2015 when a young woman, Mariam Folashade Adebayo, was killed by her ex-boyfriend, in broad daylight, using an antique gun. Had the ex-boyfriend, an ex-felon, been subjected to the normal gun purchase procedures, it is likely he would not have been able to purchase the gun.

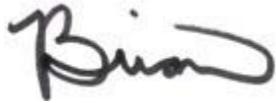
As the Senate representative on the **Maryland Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Council**, I am sponsoring two **Electric Vehicle** bills that will promote electric vehicle use in Maryland. One bill will reduce unreasonable barriers for owners of residences in multi-unit dwellings to install, at their own expense, residential electric vehicle charging stations. The second bill will prohibit parking a non-plug-in vehicle in a designated electric vehicle charging station space. With the growing demand for electric vehicles, I continue to advocate for policies which support the infrastructure needed to accommodate growing EV use in our State.

For anyone purchasing a ticket to attend a sporting event, concert, theater, etc. and are unable to attend the event, it has come to my attention that there are often onerous restrictions relating to the transfer of the purchased ticket. In an effort to protect consumer property rights, I am submitting legislation, **Nontransferable Ticketing Systems**, which allows the purchaser of the ticket greater ability to give away or resell the ticket, thereby not losing the value of the purchase.

If you are interested in learning about the rest of the bills I am introducing this Session, you can visit the Maryland General Assembly website [here](#). You will be able to follow all the legislation I will be working on over the next several months.

As always, I value your input so if you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at [brian.feldman@senate.state.md.us](mailto:brian.feldman@senate.state.md.us) or call me at [301-858-3169](tel:301-858-3169).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.