

BRIAN J. FELDMAN  
15th Legislative District  
Montgomery County

Economic Matters Committee



*The Maryland House of Delegates*  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401-1991

*Annapolis Office*  
226 Lowe House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991  
301-858-3186 · 410-841-3186  
Fax 301-858-3219 · 410-841-3219  
E-Mail [Brian\\_Feldman@house.state.md.us](mailto:Brian_Feldman@house.state.md.us)

*District Office*  
12110 Little Creek Drive  
Potomac, Maryland 20854  
301-517-5719

April 14, 2004

Dear Friend:

Thank you for contacting my office over the last year. The views expressed by constituents like you were essential to my ability to ask pertinent questions, engage in debate in an informed way, and educate my colleagues in the General Assembly. Your input also helped me prioritize my time to best serve District 15. Although I tried to respond to most of the comments I received, I was unable to reply to all of them. Please know that your concerns and suggestions provided me with valuable insight.

The bulk of most legislators' time, including mine, is spent listening to testimony during committee hearings. I serve on the Economic Matters Committee, a 24-member body with jurisdiction over a wide array of topics, including economic development, banking, public utilities, energy, corporate law, business regulation, telecommunication, and insurance. I am one of only two Montgomery County Delegates on the Committee and, as the only lawyer/CPA in Annapolis, I have found it to be a good fit. I also serve on the Montgomery County Delegation's Transportation Committee, which deals with local transportation-related legislation that requires approval by the state legislature.

Three of the most controversial issues this session related to medical malpractice insurance rates, the budget, and education funding. In addition to my traditional committee assignment, I also spent significant time working on the contentious subject of medical malpractice reform. Several Delegates, Senators, and the Governor introduced bills that were assigned to different committees and dealt with the issue in various, and sometimes contradictory, ways. To come up with a comprehensive and cohesive approach, Speaker Michael Busch created a special nine-member work group to hear testimony and recommend reforms to the General Assembly. I was privileged to be one of those appointed. The bill we drafted, which addressed several aspects of the issue, passed the House unanimously. Although it met resistance in the Senate, I believe the steps we took will help pave the way for future improvements in how we handle medical malpractice in our state.

Consensus on the budget continues to be elusive in Annapolis. The General Assembly managed to find the money to fund the Thornton Commission recommendations for our public schools and produced a balanced budget for FY05. However, the long-term structural budget deficit, estimated at \$830 million for FY06, remains unresolved. Absent a special session during the interim, the General Assembly will have to deal with this issue again next year and consider various revenue measures to fulfill the State's commitments, including the Thornton plan. Without new sources of revenue, the State budget will probably have to be cut by \$500 to \$600 million, with \$300 million likely to come from Medicaid and the remainder from cuts to

counties and local governments.

In addition to the public schools, funding for higher education is among my top priorities. Unfortunately, the Governor level funded the University of Maryland System this year and did not return any of the money eliminated in last year's budget. One legislative success in this regard is House Bill 1188, which mandates additional state funding sufficient to help keep tuition rates down at Maryland's public universities.

During this session, I introduced several pieces of legislation. I am most proud of four bills that specifically addressed issues of workers' compensation fraud, consumer protection, women's health, and the biotechnology industry.

Two of my bills passed the House and Senate with strong majorities and I expect the Governor to sign them. One requires the Workers' Compensation Commission (WCC) to refer certain cases for investigation to the Insurance Fraud Division of the Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA). It also requires an exchange of information between the WCC and the MIA, which will enhance our ability to track the level of fraud in the system.

I introduced the second measure, House Bill 15, after citizens and companies informed me of problems they faced with claim adjustments in the aftermath of Hurricane Isabel. It requires all public adjusters representing aggrieved citizens in the State of Maryland to be licensed. This law will protect the rights of consumers and strengthen oversight of the public adjuster profession by the MIA in cases of fraud or misrepresentation.

Prior to the session opening in January, I worked with the Maryland biotechnology industry to craft legislation that addresses the state's venture capital gap. Biotechnology companies provide the type of high paying jobs that we need in our state, and the sector is one of the fastest growing in the U.S. economy. Unfortunately, our region is suffering from a venture capital gap of up to \$100 million, and many companies are either closing their doors or being forced to move to other areas where venture capital is more readily available. I introduced HB 57, "The Biotechnology Investment Incentive Act," to help our small biotech companies attract venture capital. Unfortunately, the bill met resistance due to the state's fiscal situation. However, we made great strides in working with, and informing, legislators across the state of the need to invest in our blossoming biotechnology industry. I plan to introduce a new version of the bill next year.

I also sponsored legislation to provide new mothers with information about the prevalence and dangers of postpartum depression (PPD). One of my constituents, Adrienne Oleck, has started a new organization, Safermaternity.org, to address the needs of new mothers. PPD is the most common postpartum illness, affecting up to 20% of new mothers. PPD also is the most under-diagnosed obstetrical complication in the United States. For these reasons, I introduced House Bill 844, which was modeled after similar programs in New Jersey and Virginia. The bill would have required hospitals to provide information about PPD to all new mothers when they are discharged from the maternity ward. In response to this proposal, the Maryland Hospital Association agreed to develop a comprehensive discharge package that will include information, not only about PPD, but also about shaken baby syndrome and other health issues affecting new mothers and infants. I am very excited about this development and hope that it increases awareness for new mothers regarding these problems.

In addition, I co-sponsored over 80 other pieces of legislation, including the Hurricane Isabel Disaster Relief Fund, the Teachers' and Local Employees' Retirement Enhancement Act, the Public Campaign Funding Act, and bills to address clean energy, including the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard Act (RPS). I worked closely with the environmental community and members of my committee to gain passage of the RPS bill, which will help protect Maryland's air, water, and natural resources for generations to come. This law will put Maryland at the forefront of the nation in promoting the use of renewable energy.

I would like to thank you again for taking the time to advocate for the issues that are important to you. It means a great deal to me to have your opinions and your insight. Please stay in touch over the next year, and if there is any way I can be of service, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Brian Feldman