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Budget and Taxation Committee
Chair, Capital Budget Subcommittee

Chair, Senate Democratic Caucus

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

April 2025

Dear Friend:

As the clock struck midnight on April 7th, the Maryland General Assembly concluded what has been one of the most consequential 90-day legislative sessions in a generation. Despite facing unprecedented challenges, we achieved remarkable progress on behalf of all Marylanders through determination, collaboration, and principled leadership.

In the wake of January's presidential transition, we confronted seismic policy shifts from Washington while facing a multi-billion-dollar budget deficit. These federal changes resulted in nearly \$350 million in reduced tax revenues over two years due to policy changes and job losses—with significant impacts felt across Montgomery County and District 14, where the affected hardworking public servants are not just statistics, but our friends, neighbors, and vital members of our community. Additionally, the State faced \$418 million withheld from public schools (\$305 million already spent) and \$330 million in transportation funding abruptly rescinded despite existing agreements.

Throughout these difficulties, we remained steadfast in our principle of improving lives for all Marylanders. We balanced fiscal responsibility with our core values by strengthening healthcare access, protecting immigrant communities, defending reproductive freedom, and advancing affordable clean energy solutions. I'm especially proud we restored \$181.5 million for essential services supporting Marylanders with developmental disabilities. This funding ensures individuals with disabilities can continue living with dignity and independence in their communities, reflecting our commitment to protecting vulnerable residents even during challenging fiscal times.

I'm also proud to have sponsored 11 bills this session addressing various needs in our communities. As Chair of the Capital Budget Subcommittee, I worked to ensure the passage of [House Bill 351](#), which invests historic amounts of capital funds to stimulate our local economies and provide Marylanders with family-sustaining jobs. This funding delivers vital support to our anchor institutions and strategically invests State dollars where they're needed most. Working

closely with our District 14 team—**Delegates Anne Kaiser, Pam Queen, and Bernice Mireku-North**—we secured millions for critical projects throughout our community and Montgomery County that will create jobs and strengthen our local infrastructure.

Investments Coming to our Area:

Community Projects:

- Olney Community Hub Building Purchase and Renovations -- \$5.2 million
- American Legion 171 - \$385,000
- OASIS Farming Diversification and Capacity Improvements -- \$228,000
- Friends House Retirement Community- \$100,000
- Friends House - ArtSpace -- \$50,000
- Olney Rotary Club -- \$50,000
- Damascus Main Street- \$50,000
- Muslim Community Center Kitchen-- \$30,000
- Sunflower Bakery- \$30,000
- Harmony360- \$25,000
- Ethiopian Eritrean Special Needs Community- \$25,000
- Olney Farmers Market: \$5,000

Education and Schools:

- Montgomery County Public School Construction - \$4.5 million
- Blake High School new roof - \$1 million
- Springbrook High School HVAC replacement & upgrade - \$2.4 million
- Montgomery County Local School Playgrounds --\$1.5 million
- Sherwood High School Softball field- \$686,000
- Ivymount School -- \$330,000
- Damascus High School Athletic Facility -- \$150,000
- Infant & Toddlers Facility, Olney- \$200,000
- Greenwood Elementary School Security upgrades - \$200,000
- Katherine Thomas School playground - \$165,000
- Westover Elementary School -- \$150,000
- Clarksburg Library -- \$20,000

Arts, Culture & Heritage

- Strathmore Hall Performing Arts Center- \$3.5 million
- American Film Initiative -- \$300,000
- Montgomery County History Center - \$270,000

- Sandy Spring Museum Library Archives - \$200,000
- Salem United Methodist (Historic Preservation-Brookeville)-- \$150,000
- Olney Mill House- \$172,000
- Damascus Heritage Society Museum -- \$100,000

Public Safety & Infrastructure

- Rt.108 Crosswalks Across from Sherwood High School- \$120,000
- Laytonsville Volunteer Fire Department -- \$100,000
- Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department -- \$100,000

Parks & Recreation

- Freedman's State Park- \$2 million
- Bowie Mill Bike Trail- \$2.1 million
- Girl Scout's Camp Brighton Woods- \$400,000
- Calverton Galway Local Park -- \$275,000

Healthcare Facilities:

- Adventist Healthcare Shady Grove Medical Center -- \$1.3 million
- MedStar Montgomery (Behavioral Health Inpatient Facility Renovation) - \$100,000

Legislation that I sponsored this session:

Supporting Foster Youth in Higher Education and Expanding Opportunity Pathways- [Senate Bill 765/ House Bill 809](#) allow young adults in foster care enrolled in colleges, universities, or vocational training programs to return to their previous placement providers during academic breaks and transitions. This legislation ensures no student must choose between pursuing education and having a stable place to call home.

TerpsEXCEED Program: Securing Stable Funding and Educational Opportunities for Students with Disabilities- [Senate Bill 603/ House Bill 458](#) authorize the Governor to allocate money in the state budget for the TerpsEXCEED program, which creates vital educational and employment opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities throughout Maryland. Previously reliant on unpredictable year-to-year grant funding, this legislation provides the stability needed for TerpsEXCEED to sustain and expand its impactful services, ultimately benefiting more students across the state and strengthening Maryland's commitment to inclusive education. While this legislation is not a mandate , I worked closely with the committee to secure \$100,000 to keep the program going..

Eliminating Burdensome Renewal Requirements for Sensitive Medical Conditions- [Senate Bill 707/House Bill 436](#) eliminate the burdensome 2-year renewal requirement for medical exemptions allowing enhanced vehicle window tinting. This legislation benefits Marylanders

with permanent medical conditions while maintaining appropriate oversight by requiring certification from a licensed physician confirming the condition's permanence.

State Mineral Act: Designating Chromite as Maryland's Official Mineral and Honoring Our Geological Heritage: [Senate Bill 764/House Bill 411](#) designated chromite as Maryland's official state mineral. This recognition celebrates chromite's significant historical importance to Maryland and creates valuable educational opportunities for students statewide. This legislation originated from an idea presented to me in 2017 by David Shore, a Montgomery County native who was just 10 years old at the time. Now a teenager, David demonstrated his enduring passion for Maryland's geological heritage by participating in both Senate and House hearings in March to support the bill's passage. Orange Crush was also named the official state cocktail.

Securing a Living Wage for Education Support Professionals: [Senate Bill 892/ House Bill 1369](#) would have established a \$25 minimum wage for education support professionals and required a feasibility study. While this legislation didn't pass, we successfully advocated with the Budget & Taxation Committee to include language in the budget requiring MSDE to complete the feasibility study on establishing a \$25 minimum wage for non-certificated ESPs. This represents important progress toward fair compensation for these valuable educational team members.

Major Accomplishments of the Maryland General Assembly in 2025

Passing a Balanced Budget that Maintains Core Commitments to Marylanders: The MGA balanced the FY26 budget ([House Bill 350](#) and [House Bill 352](#)) with \$2 billion in cuts and \$1.2 billion in new revenue, protecting core services while addressing the deficit. The \$66.9 billion budget preserves funding for Medicaid covering 1.5 million residents, increases school funding by 7.3%, allocates \$500 million for transportation infrastructure, restores \$181.5 million for developmental disability services, invests \$139 million in economic growth, provides \$121.8 million in police aid (\$46 million above required levels), allocates \$100 million for climate efforts, and maintains \$2.4 billion in reserves including \$2.1 billion in the Rainy Day Fund. This fiscally responsible approach ensures state services continue while building financial resilience against future uncertainties, especially important given the targeted approach that allowed 94% of tax filers to pay the same or less while avoiding broader taxes like a delivery tax or elimination of itemized deductions.

Lowering Energy Bills by Promoting the Affordability, Reliability, and Predictability of our Electric Grid: The MGA passed a comprehensive energy package including the Next Generation Energy Act ([Senate Bill 937](#)) providing \$200 million in customer refunds (averaging \$80 per customer) in summer and winter installments, expediting cleaner in-state energy generation, creating cost containment mechanisms for utility gas infrastructure spending, ensuring multi-year rate plans benefit customers, removing waste incineration from renewable subsidy

programs, and making data centers pay their fair share. The Renewable Energy Certainty Act ([Senate Bill 931](#)) streamlined renewable project approvals while implementing a first-in-nation 5% cap on agricultural land use for solar and allowing local governments to participate in community solar. The Energy Resource Adequacy and Planning Act ([Senate Bill 909](#)) created a Strategic Energy Planning Office to improve grid resilience and reduce dependence on external grid operators. This package addresses the immediate crisis of high energy costs while building long-term solutions for affordable, reliable, and clean energy in what represents the most aggressive energy affordability package for Marylanders in decades.

Fighting Back Against Federal Government Chaos and Overreach: Maryland responded to federal disruptions through [Senate Bill 749](#) expediting licenses for fired federal healthcare workers, [House Bill 1424](#) creating financial assistance for laid-off federal employees and expedited state hiring processes, establishing a bipartisan Senate and House Joint Federal Action Oversight Committee, [House Bill 1222](#) protecting immigrant communities from warrantless enforcement actions in sensitive locations like schools and hospitals, plus [Senate Bill 608](#) helping immigrant crime victims who aid police investigations avoid deportation. These measures shield Marylanders from the impacts of federal instability, particularly critical in a state with numerous federal workers, contractors, federal agency headquarters, and billions in research institution funding that makes Maryland especially vulnerable to federal disruption.

Developing World-Class Public Schools for Maryland Children: The MGA strengthened the Blueprint for Maryland's Future through the Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act ([House Bill 504](#)) giving school systems more funding flexibility, extending career counseling services, creating a school leadership training program for administrators, developing pathways for more school professionals to enter teaching, and strengthening the community school model. [Senate Bill 68](#) required the State Department of Education to create a restorative practices plan supporting children's socioemotional wellbeing, while [House Bill 1442](#) addressed chronic absenteeism through the Truancy Reduction Program following pandemic-related attendance challenges. These enhancements build upon one of the most transformative education investments in state history that is already expanding publicly funded Pre-K, strengthening teacher pipelines, and creating clearer pathways to college and career readiness for all Maryland students regardless of zip code.

Reducing Crime and Maintaining Safe Neighborhoods: Public safety measures included the Sergeant Patrick Kepp Act ([Senate Bill 590](#)) cracking down on reckless and aggressive driving, the Organized Retail Theft Act ([Senate Bill 11](#)) enabling prosecutors to aggregate multiple theft offenses by the same individual across multiple counties, [Senate Bill 360](#) creating justice avenues for victims of AI-generated revenge porn as technology evolves, and the Rape Kit Testing

Tracking Program and Grant Fund ([Senate Bill 669](#)) supporting investigations of older untested sexual assault kits while extending evidence submission deadlines. These targeted approaches address evolving public safety challenges while providing law enforcement with necessary tools and resources to ensure individuals and families feel safe in their communities, with ongoing commitment to providing police and prosecutors what they need to protect Marylanders.

Preserving High-Quality Health Care Our Residents Rely On: The Lowering Prescription Drug Costs for All Marylanders Now Act ([Senate Bill 357](#)) empowered the Prescription Drug Affordability Board to set medication price limits, offering relief to families struggling with high costs. The Preserve Telehealth Access Act ([Senate Bill 372](#)) made telehealth permanently available as a critical care option, [Senate Bill 5](#) established permanent State-Based Young Adult Subsidies ensuring affordable health insurance through the Maryland Health Benefits Exchange, and [Senate Bill 684](#) created a health equity dashboard to track disparities and hold health professionals accountable for outcomes. These initiatives ensure healthcare remains accessible and affordable for all Marylanders, particularly vital as federal healthcare programs face uncertainty, with the principle that no one should choose between affordable care and putting food on the table.

Strengthening Apprenticeships and Skills Training: Meeting the demands of a 21st century economy requires developing opportunities for alternative workforce pathways. Traditional school-based learning often leaves students with college debt and little practical experience. The Registered Apprenticeship Investments for a Stronger Economy (RAISE) Act ([Senate Bill 431](#)) modernizes Maryland's apprenticeship system by expanding qualifying programs, allowing individuals to earn while learning trade skills. This shift ensures more Marylanders can access career training that aligns with industry needs, providing not just jobs but accessible, sustainable careers that strengthen our economic future by building a dependable, skilled labor force.

Demanding the Highest Ethical Standards from Elected Officials: Conflicts of interest undermine our democracy. When our elected officials put their personal interests first, they send a message that their constituents' needs are less of a priority. We passed [House Bill 932](#) this year to ensure future Governors avoid conflicts at all costs by restricting their ability to participate in any matter that may come before a State agency that involves their business interests.

Advancing Basic Consumer Protections: Consumers often get trapped in costly subscription renewals buried in fine print or automatically renewed without clear notice. [Senate Bill 49](#) requires companies to clearly disclose automatic renewal terms, including post-trial pricing and

simple cancellation methods, eliminating surprise charges and ensuring Marylanders remain informed and in control when signing up for services, protecting both their financial interests and consumer rights.

Supporting Maryland's Seniors and Nursing Home Residents: Maryland's seniors and nursing home residents require special protection as vulnerable members of society. [Senate Bill 223](#) expanded the Senior Call-Check Service into the Social Connections Program, providing older adults at risk of isolation with regular check-ins via phone, text, video chats, and in-person visits, while connecting them to volunteer networks, community events, and peer support. Additionally, recognizing the Maryland Department of Health's insufficient capacity for nursing home oversight, [Senate Bill 376](#) authorizes local jurisdictions to conduct inspections and investigate complaints upon county request, addressing critical staffing shortages in facility monitoring.

Senatorial Scholarship for the 2025-2026 Academic Year

I am now accepting applications for my Senatorial Scholarship for the 2025-2026 Academic Year. For those interested in applying, the application can be found [here](#), or please contact my office by emailing Craig.Zucker@senate.state.md.us.

Staying in Touch

Please remember that although the Legislative Session is over, I will still be working hard for you. You can contact my office at any time if you need constituent service or if you simply want to share your thoughts and priorities with me. To stay updated on legislative news and community events, please join my newsletter by [subscribing here](#) or by emailing Craig.Zucker@senate.state.md.us. As always, thank you for trusting me with the responsibility of representing you in the Maryland General Assembly. Representing you in the State Senate is truly an honor.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'C. Zucker', written in a cursive style.

Craig J. Zucker
Maryland State Senate
District 14