

LUKE CLIPPINGER  
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Dear Friends,

The 2020 regular session of the Maryland General Assembly concluded on Wednesday, March 18th, nearly three weeks earlier than scheduled, making it the first time since the Civil War that the session has been interrupted. Yesterday, April 6, 2020, would have been the 90th day of the legislative session, and we normally would have adjourned Sine Die at midnight.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, an unprecedented end to the 2020 session pushed Maryland legislators to pass important legislation on a fast-paced, truncated timeline. I am very proud of the work that the Maryland General Assembly was able to do in such a short amount of time, under difficult circumstances. With the help of our amazing staff, clerks, state troopers, and legal counsel, we were able to pass legislation that will transform our state's educational system, protect our communities from gun crimes, and protect Marylanders from the effects of the COVID-19 crisis, among many other things. Over 2,000 bills were considered, and 681 bills were sent to the Governor during this abbreviated session. This session, my office was in contact with over 350 constituents who voiced their opinions on important legislation.

During the 2020 session, I continued to serve as the Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, which has been an honor for me. I am proud of the work the committee has done in addressing necessary legislation related to our criminal, juvenile, family, and civil law, as well as the work Team 46 has done for our community. If you would like a copy of the end-of-session report specific to the House Judiciary Committee, please contact my office at [luke.clippinger@house.state.md.us](mailto:luke.clippinger@house.state.md.us).

The 440th Session of the Maryland General Assembly was not only remarkable because of the way the Session ended, but it was also remarkable in how it began. This session made history as Adrienne A. Jones became the first woman, first African-American and first person of color to serve as the Maryland Speaker of the House. Speaker Jones stepped into the position following the passing of longtime Speaker Mike Busch.

Also, I am so proud that our Team 46 Senator, Bill Ferguson, stepped into the role of President of the Maryland Senate. The Senate recognized what we already knew: Senator Ferguson is a leader who has the skills to improve our children's education, public safety, and environment.

Here are some of the issue areas that the General Assembly addressed this Session:

### **Maryland's Response to COVID-19**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Maryland General Assembly passed emergency legislation to address this public health crisis. HB 1663, the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Protection Act of 2020, is an emergency bill that allows the Governor to take several actions to expand healthcare coverage, unemployment benefits and consumer protections throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency. This legislation does many things to help those impacted by the virus, including eliminating co-pays and other out-of-pocket costs for COVID-19 testing and immunization, providing unemployment insurance benefits to workers who are out of work or quarantined due to COVID-19, and protecting consumers from price gouging of necessary goods and services.

### **State Budget**

The MDGA also passed the State Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2021. The budget bill (SB190), introduced by the President of the Senate, eliminates the structural deficit for next year and leaves over \$1 billion in cash reserves to guard against an economic downturn. Some of the highlights in the budget include investment in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and funding to support resources for targeted prosecutions of the most violent offenders. The budget also allows the Governor to access up to \$100 million extra in funding to support small business and re-open hospitals in the COVID-19 crisis.

### **Education**

This session, the Maryland General Assembly worked hard to invest in our children's futures through groundbreaking educational legislation.

On March 17, the MDGA passed the historic Blueprint for Maryland's Future, or HB1300. HB1300 will transform Maryland's early childhood, primary, and secondary education system by requiring the State and counties to distribute education aid to the programs and schools that need it the most. This bill invests an additional \$4 billion in early childhood education, as well as college and career readiness programs so that every child has the opportunity to compete in a global economy. Maryland students are facing significant gaps in opportunity and achievement due to lacking resources, teacher shortages, and overcrowded classrooms, among many other problems. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future is not just an investment in education, but also an investment in the future of our children and their ability to transform our communities. Every child deserves the best education the state can provide, regardless of their zip code, the color of their skin, or their family's income level.

Also on March 17, the MDGA passed House Bill 1, or the Built to Learn Act of 2020. HB1 is a historic school construction bill, which will invest an additional \$2.2 billion for school construction projects. This bill will focus its investments on fixing the issues of overcrowding

and lack of efficient heat or air conditioning, among many other things that keep children out of the classroom. Every child deserves a safe and healthy learning environment.

## **Crime & Public Safety**

Crime and public safety issues are an ongoing battle in the state of Maryland. These issues especially hit home for us in Baltimore as we continue to deal with high rates of violent crime. This session, the Maryland General Assembly passed a number of important pieces of legislation in order to protect the public's safety.

On the first day of the 2020 session, the House Judiciary Committee held its first bill hearing with HB4. House Bill 4 will close a longstanding loophole in the background check system for rifles and shotguns. Under current law, someone who purchases a rifle or shotgun from a gun shop has a background check done. However, that person could then sell or lend that rifle or shotgun to another person without that next person required to do a background check. The hearing saw lots of support from the public, with many groups and individuals coming to testify in favor of the bill. On March 16, the MDGA passed HB 4, making public safety surrounding gun crimes a priority. HB4 will result in tens of thousands of additional background checks for long gun transfers, excluding transfers between immediate family members, antique firearm collectors, law enforcement, and hunters.

On March 18, the MDGA continued its commitment to fighting gun crimes by passing HB1629, the Firearm Crime Study. This important firearm legislation, which I introduced this session, will require the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) to conduct a study regarding firearm crimes committed in the State since August 1, 2015. This bill requires coordinated efforts across State and local law enforcement agencies in reporting gun crime findings. This study will be instrumental in understanding and tracing gun crimes.

The MDGA also took measures to address violent crime by passing SB907/HB1579. This bill focuses on coordinating State resources, ensuring interagency communications and intelligence sharing, as well as establishing regional councils to identify and study crime trends.

In passing SB929, the Public Resources Organizing to End Crime Together (P.R.O.T.E.C.T.) Program, the MDGA showed its commitment to combating neighborhood decline in Baltimore City and reducing crime across the State. The P.R.O.T.E.C.T. Program establishes 10 high-crime microzones within the State and creates a civilian "End the Violence" P.R.O.T.E.C.T. coordinator position for each high-crime microzone. Each coordinator is responsible for ensuring maximum utilization of existing crime prevention programs and grants, coordinating community and youth programs, and leading engagement efforts with local law enforcement agencies. This bill also calls for the Baltimore Police Department, Department of Juvenile Services, and Department of Parole and Probation to establish a task force partnership with teams to provide intensive supervision of adult and juvenile violent offenders. We know that coordinating efforts and resources across the State is vital in the fight against violent crime.

We worked hard this session to make it clear that hate has no place in our communities. The MDGA made cracking down on hate crimes a priority by passing HB5 and HB917. HB5 increases penalties for hate crimes by making it a crime to place or inscribe an item or a symbol of hate on any property without the permission of the owner, with the intent to threaten or intimate. This bill makes violators guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment for up to three years and/or a \$5,000 fine. HB917 alters current law to prohibit acts of hate, such as an attack/threat against another person or destruction of property, if they are motivated either in whole or in substantial part by another person's or group's race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, disability, or national origin. This bill, also known as the 2nd Lieutenant Richard Collins III's Law, was created in response to the tragic May 2017 murder of 2nd Lieutenant Richard Collins III, who was fatally stabbed while waiting at a bus stop on the University of Maryland, College Park campus. Though there was evidence of the defendant having racially charged ideologies, the hate crime charge in Collins' case was dropped. HB5 and HB917 demonstrate that hate will not be tolerated in Maryland.

### **LGBT Rights**

On March 18, the MDGA passed HB81 which is an incredibly important piece of legislation to the Maryland LGBTQ community. HB81 will repeal the crimes of sodomy and "unnatural or perverted sexual practice." While the Supreme Court of the United States has ruled that American laws prohibiting sodomy between consenting adults are unconstitutional, Maryland still has a law on the book. Prior to sodomy bans being found unconstitutional, these bans were used as a means to prosecute members of the LGBTQ community in consensual relationships. Getting rid of this ban will give the Maryland LGBTQ community the dignity and respect that they have always deserved.

### **Housing**

On March 17, the MDGA took the necessary steps to ensure equal housing opportunities in Maryland by passing HB231. HB231, the Housing Opportunities Made Equal Act, introduced by Delegate Brooke Lierman of Team 46, prohibits the discriminatory housing practice of denying someone residence on the basis of their source of income. Many individuals and families across the state rely on government assistance and rental assistance programs, such as the Housing Choice Voucher Program, to pay for housing costs. Programs like these give people better access to affordable housing and greater housing choice. Under HB231, vouchers and other forms of rental/housing assistance are defined as a source of income (SOI), and individuals or families cannot be discriminated against by using these types of payments. Many states already have SOI discrimination laws in place; it's time that Maryland enacted its own SOI laws to ensure equal housing opportunity.

Your 46th District Delegation also worked closely to ensure that our community was receiving the resources and funding for the state it needs to thrive. Through the legislative bond process, Team 46 was able to secure over \$2 million in the capital budget for community organizations working throughout the 46th District. Some of those projects include the Chesapeake Shakespeare Company's Downtown Theatre, Port Discovery, and South Baltimore Community Land Trust.

I'd like to close out by saying thank you to everyone for all of your support during this legislative session. It is always an honor to represent the people of the 46th District, and I hope to continue to make Maryland a better place to live and work. You can always reach me at [Luke.Clippinger@house.state.md.us](mailto:Luke.Clippinger@house.state.md.us) or call 410-841-3488.

See you around the neighborhood,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Luke Clippinger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Luke