

SENATOR SARAH ELFRETH  
Legislative District 30  
Anne Arundel County

Budget and Taxation Committee  
Subcommittees

Capital Budget

Education, Business and Administration  
Chair, Pensions

Senate Chair

Joint Committee on Administrative,  
Executive, and Legislative Review

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and  
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area

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Anne Arundel County Senate Delegation



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Dear Neighbor:

The Maryland General Assembly recently adjourned our 444<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session on April 11<sup>th</sup> and I am proud to report on the work that transpired over the last 90 days on your behalf.

We entered Session in January under the cloud of the COVID-19 Omicron variant causing massive disruptions in communities throughout the State of Maryland. At the same time, we experienced a historic budget surplus that allowed the General Assembly to make strategic and generational investments for Marylanders across the State. Throughout the session my office also continued to help facilitate solutions with housing, employment, social services, and more for hundreds of constituents.

In this end-of-session letter, you will find updates on the 24 pieces of legislation I authored that are now on the Governor's desk, Maryland's balanced budget, the over \$34 million in capital funding we are bringing home to District 30, and major legislation passed by the General Assembly. It is the privilege of my life to represent you in the Maryland Senate. Thank you for your continued faith, counsel, and engagement.

**Legislative Victories**

In addition to working to pass a balanced budget and co-sponsoring legislation on an array of issues, I am proud to report that **24 of the 32 bills** I sponsored passed, **all with bipartisan votes**. Those include:

**Great Maryland Outdoors Act (SB541/HB727):** Maryland's State Parks are critically important to our public health, environment, and economy. SB541 provides once-in-a-generation funding and accountability to our parks to address overcrowding, reverse underfunding, increase accessibility for more Marylanders, tackle a deep backlog of critical repairs, increase water access, prepare our parks for a changing climate, and more.

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury – Alternative Therapies Fund (SB709/HB1367):** Despite serving our nation, too few veterans have access to meaningful therapeutic treatments for PTSD. SB709 creates a first-in-the-nation fund to provide no-cost critical alternative therapies for veterans surviving with PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injuries.

**Family Law – Marriage of Minors (SB29/HB83):** This critical legislation raises the age of marriage from 15 to 17 and provides strong protections for 17-year olds wishing to marry. Every public policy indicator - from educational outcomes, instances of domestic violence, and divorce rates - suggest that minors should not enter the government contract of marriage. After 7 years of introduction I am proud to report that this legislation has officially passed!

**Maryland Higher Education Commission - Procedures – Alterations (SB501/HB1030):** This legislation is a major step forward for our higher education system in Maryland – it will require award notifications for scholarships to be made by April 15<sup>th</sup> each year, creates a unified scholarship application so students can apply once for all scholarships, integrates information sharing to expedite scholarship application review, and in the budget creates a new online platform to replace the current antiquated system for students to use.

**Natural Resources - Oysters - Spat, Shell, and Substrate (SB830/HB1228):** This legislation will increase spat production and shell recycling of Maryland's keystone species: the Eastern oyster. The bill also includes funding for a critically important Bay bottom survey, not conducted since the 1970s, collaborative research program on substrate, economic incentives for shucking houses and a restructuring of the restaurant oyster shell recycling tax credit.

**Conservation Finance Act (SB348/HB653):** Meeting our Chesapeake Bay restoration goals will require an all-hands-on-deck approach. SB348 leverages the power of the private sector community to improve water quality, advance environmental justice and public health, expand initiatives around forest and agricultural soil carbon sequestration, and reward projects that deliver co-benefits like local jobs, flood risk reduction, and climate resilience.

**Environment - PFAS Chemicals - Prohibitions & Requirements (SB273/HB275):** Protects Marylanders from toxic PFA chemicals by: prohibiting the use of firefighting foam laced with PFAS; banning the use of food packaging that contains PFAS; and, prohibiting the sale of carpets that contain PFAs. This bill builds on successfully passed legislation and makes Maryland a leader in addressing these harmful "forever chemicals."

**Sales and Use Tax - Diapers – Exemption (SB316/HB282):** Diapers are essential in keeping children across Maryland clean, dry, and healthy. Yet, especially with recent inflation and fluctuations in our economy, too many Marylanders struggle to afford clean diapers for their children. SB316 exempts the Sales and Use Tax for diapers and thus help ensure more Maryland families are able to purchase these essential products.

**State Retirement and Pension System – Investment Climate Risk: Fiduciary Duties (SB566/HB740):** The threat of climate change poses a significant risk to Maryland's economy and quality of life. SB566 establishes procedures for the Maryland State Retirement & Pensions System Board to regularly evaluate this risk to the investment portfolio and establishes that climate risk should be considered as part of the System's fiduciary responsibility.

**Invasive and Native Plants - Classification, Listing, and Use (SB7/HB15):** Recognizing the ecological threat invasive plant species pose, SB7 requires a necessary update to Maryland's list of invasive plants, requires a public listing of native species, and prioritizes the use of native plants in public projects.

**Parkinson's Disease Registry Advisory Committee – Established (SB740/HB1412):** SB740 forms the Parkinson's Disease Registry Advisory Committee to assist in the development and implementation of such a registry – it will ultimately allow for researchers across the country to have the best possible chance to use this data and prevalence patterns towards finding a cure for this progressive, chronic disease.

**Property Tax - Agricultural Accessory Use Assessment – Study and Report (SB567/HB1282):** This legislation will convene a workgroup to study and report on how we can better support burgeoning agricultural small businesses.

**State Retirement and Pension System – Divestment From Russia (SB1005/HB1482):** This legislation will ensure that our State Pension System took immediate action to withdraw any investments from Russia in lieu of their invasion of Ukraine.

**Sustainable Maryland Program Fund – Establishment (SB14/HB100):** Provides support to communities, municipalities, and HOAs in realizing environmental and sustainability projects through the University of Maryland's nationally recognized Sustainable Maryland Program.

**Vehicle Excise Tax - Exemption - Active Duty Military (SB109/HB497):** Eliminates the excise tax on vehicles for those stationed in Maryland in active duty and those returning to Maryland after service to our nation.

**Community Solar Systems - Exemption from Property Taxes (SB264/HB76):** Incentivizes community solar projects that benefit Marylanders who could use help with their energy bills. SB264 has the double benefit of helping Maryland achieve our 50% renewable energy goals and providing a reduction in energy bills for low- and moderate-income families.

**Anne Arundel County and City of Annapolis – Small, Minority, and Women-Owned Business Account - Local State of Emergency (SB310/HB386):** SB310 will allow recovery grants, under locally-declared states of emergency, to be quickly deployed to impacted businesses & nonprofits in Anne Arundel County as well as study what the State should do in the future to provide more support in the event of local State of Emergencies.

**Bay Restoration Fund - Reporting and Privately Owned Wastewater Facilities** (SB354/HB714): SB354 clarifies that the Bay Restoration Fund, funded by Marylanders, should be used for projects that benefit the public and achieve cost-effective pollution reductions.

**Teachers' Retirement and Pension Systems – Reemployment** (SB410/HB743): SB410 removes a barrier to help retired educators get back into the classroom - keeping experienced educators teaching and addressing the worst staffing shortages.

**Anne Arundel County - Special Taxing Districts – Exemptions** (SB539/HB635): Codifies Anne Arundel County's current practice of granting exemptions for those that live in special taxing districts, most notably disabled veterans and surviving spouses.

**Maryland 529 Program – Board Authority and State Contribution** (SB411/HB444): Addresses a significant loophole in Maryland's 529 Save4College plan to combat significant waste & abuse.

### **Maryland's Balanced Budget**

As a member of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, one of my biggest responsibilities during the legislative session is to ensure that we pass a balanced and responsible Budget that reflects Maryland's values and priorities.

In contrast to where our economy was a year ago, we entered this legislative session with a "structural surplus" – something that Maryland had not seen in decades. With this in mind, we took deliberate action pass a \$61 billion dollar balanced budget that preserves \$2.6 billion dollars in Rainy Day Funds, makes generational investments in infrastructure, all while funding Maryland's values. The FY23 Budget:

- **Provides Funds for Tax Relief:** The budget plan allocates \$350 million of general funds to provide tax relief including: an income tax credit for retirees; a work opportunity tax credit for employers who hire individuals with barriers to employment; and a sales tax exemptions related to diapers, baby products, medical devices, oral care products, and diabetic products.
- **Increases Funding for Public Schools:** State support for public schools will exceed \$7.9 billion. Direct aid to local school systems will increase an estimated 6.8%, including full funding of all fiscal 2023 Blueprint for Maryland's Future mandates.
- **Increases our Investment in Crime Prevention:** Funding for crime prevention and victim services increases by about \$148 million, including: \$46 million of enhanced funding for police aid distributed to target areas across the State experiencing the most violent crime and \$35 million for victim service providers.
- **Secures Record Funds for the City of Annapolis:** The budget includes \$794,875 as a payment in lieu of taxes directly to the City of Annapolis to support public safety and first responders.
- **Maintains Quality Child Care Options for Families:** \$53 million of stabilization grants to child care providers are funded along with bonuses for child care providers (\$16 million), a child care revolving loan fund (\$15 million), enhanced payment rates for therapeutic child care (\$4 million) and additional/affordable child care scholarships for families of limited means (\$12 million).
- **Funds Rate Increases for Providers Serving Vulnerable Populations:** An 8.0% rate increase is funded for most health care providers, including the DDA community. Rate increases of roughly 10.3% are authorized for group homes serving youth in foster care and the juvenile justice system.
- **Funds Legislative Priorities:** The final budget includes more than \$650 million for legislative priorities including: workforce shortage assistance for hospitals (\$50 million), assistance for nursing homes and assisted living facilities (\$40 million), funds to expand apprenticeships (\$25 million), grants to arts and tourism organizations (\$50 million), and funds to serve 1,350 youth on the autism waiver waiting list (\$30 million).
- **Boosts Employee Salaries to Facilitate Recruitment and Retention in a Highly Competitive Labor Market:** Cost-of-living adjustments (COLA), employee salary increments, and bonuses are funded for most employees in both fiscal 2022 and 2023 at a cost of \$832 million.
- **Invests in Higher Education:** The budget provides a 21.3% increase in State support to Maryland's four-year public colleges and universities while limiting tuition increases for in-state students at the University System

of Maryland institutions to 2.0%. Community college formula aid increases by 20%, aid to nonpublic higher education institutions rises by 34%, and funding for Educational Excellence scholarships increases by 17%.

- **Assists the Economically Vulnerable:** Recipients of Temporary Cash Assistance and Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP) benefits will receive an extra \$45 per month in benefits during fiscal 2023 to mitigate the impact of inflation. The budget also includes: \$10 million for food banks; \$4.8 million to expand the Summer Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) from about 4,000 children to more than 50,000; Approximately \$2 million to support an increase in the benefit for the Senior SNAP; and \$6.5 million for an early phase-in of ongoing enhancements to the TDAP benefit.
- **Protects our Digital Infrastructure:** The budget includes \$210 million to improve State government cybersecurity.

The General Assembly also worked with Governor Hogan to invest nearly **\$7.8 billion** in capital funds to directly support economic development by investing directly in our State’s infrastructure and communities. I am proud to report that over **\$34 million** in funding and projects will have a direct impact on District 30, including:

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| • Ancient City Lodge (\$100k)                 | • Anne Arundel Medical Center (\$600k)    | • Mary Church Terrell Pavilion (\$125k)       |
| • Annapolis City Dock (\$10M)                 | • Camp Letts (\$65k)                      | • Monarch Academy (\$325k)                    |
| • Annapolis Maritime Museum (\$150k)          | • Captain Avery Museum (\$25k)            | • Newtowne Community Resource Center (\$1.5M) |
| • Annapolis Middle School (\$100k)            | • Carr’s Beach Land Acquisition (\$3.7M)  | • Rise and Shine Bakery (\$100k)              |
| • Annapolis SPCA (\$100k)                     | • Franklin Point State Park (\$350k)      | • Sandy Point State Park (\$180k)             |
| • Annapolis State Police Barrack (\$232k)     | • Galesville Historic Kolb Store (\$100k) | • Stanton Community Center (\$600k)           |
| • Annapolis Undergrounding Utilities (\$500k) | • Girl Scouts Camp Woodlands (\$2M)       | • The Summit School (\$500k)                  |
| • Anne Arundel County Aging Schools (\$506k)  | • Hammond Harwood House (\$150k)          | • Thomas Point Lighthouse (\$150k)            |
| • Anne Arundel County Fairgrounds (\$50k)     | • Hillsmere Marsh Restoration (\$109k)    | • Truxton Park Improvements (\$750k)          |
| • Anne Arundel County Fireboat (\$1.5M)       | • Historic Annapolis (\$3M)               | • Universal Lodge 14 (\$100k)                 |
| • Anne Arundel County Local Parks (\$5.35M)   | • Langton Green Community Farm (\$100k)   | • Wellness House Annapolis (\$200k)           |
| • Anne Arundel Food Bank (\$500k)             | • Lothian Boys and Girls Club (\$240k)    | • Wild Kid Acres (\$250k)                     |
|   |   | • YWCA Trafficking Safe House (\$1.35M)       |

**Here is an overview of some of the most important issues the Maryland General Assembly addressed in the 2022 Legislative Session:**

**Targeted Tax Relief to Fight Inflation:** The Senate of Maryland, the Maryland House of Delegates, and Governor Hogan came together across party lines to enact nearly \$2 billion in economic support for Maryland’s working families, retirees, and small businesses. At a time when Maryland has a historic surplus and a balanced budget, we invested in vulnerable populations who have spent a lifetime

caring for others in a way that is fiscally sustainable and responsible. That tax relief package included:

- \$1.55 billion in relief For Retirees 65 and older making up to \$100,000 in retirement income, and married couples making up to \$150,000. As a result, 80% of Maryland’s retirees will receive substantial relief or pay no state income taxes at all (SB405/HB1468);

- \$195 million to fund the Work Opportunity Tax Credit to incentivize employers and businesses to hire and retain workers from underserved communities that have faced significant barriers to employment (SB598/HB2);
- \$115.6 million in ‘Family Budget Boosters’ including sales tax exemptions for child care products such as diapers, car seats, and baby bottles, and critical health products such as dental hygiene products, diabetic care products, and medical devices (SB316/HB282, HB288, SB571/HB492, SB488/HB364, and HB1151); and
- \$100 million to suspend Maryland’s gas tax for 30 days to provide short-term relief to Marylanders as prices at the gas pump increased quickly due to the events in Ukraine (SB1010/HB1486).

**Reducing Violence and Enhancing Safety:** Addressing the unacceptable level of crime in Baltimore City and across Maryland is of the utmost importance, especially as incredibly high numbers of homicides and violent crimes continue to occur. The Senate of Maryland advanced a comprehensive public safety package aimed at addressing every stage in the justice system including prevention, intervention, criminal justice, and rehabilitation. In addition to a \$148 million increase in crime prevention and victim services funding in the State budget, that package included:

- Scaling up funding for warrant apprehension efforts throughout the State (SB585);
- Establishing a Maryland State Police Gun Center to track gun crimes through prosecution (SB861);
- Banning unserialized and untraceable ghost guns in Maryland (SB387);
- Ensuring judicial and prosecutorial transparency so the public can access trends (SB763);
- Increasing coordination between the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and the Baltimore Police Department if a defendant of a violent crime is released before trial (SB586); and
- Requiring that all State residential facilities create and implement safety plans (SB3).

**Expanding Access to Mental, Dental, and Other Health Care:** Our state’s health care systems have been strained to a breaking point over the last two years of

the COVID-19 pandemic and Marylanders’ health has suffered as a result. One of the most important roles of government is to ensure care is accessible and of the highest quality.

Many Marylanders have seen acute challenges to their mental health from the isolation, grief, and stress that the pandemic continues to cause. The Maryland General Assembly established a 9-8-8 hotline for Marylanders in crisis (SB241/HB293), created a \$3 million Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Support Services Program (HB513), and ensured unnecessary barriers to entry are removed from individuals on Medicaid seeking psychiatric inpatient care (SB659/HB684).

At the same time we made key investments in Marylanders’ physical health through the State’s operating budget for Fiscal Year 2023 (SB290) including a \$14 billion in Medicaid to cover 1.5 million residents, an 8% rate increase for most health care providers, and \$202 million in funding for temporary and ongoing funding enhancements for providers serving vulnerable populations. We also expanded Medicaid coverage to include dental care for adults whose annual income is at 133% of the federal poverty level (SB150/HB6) with \$27 million specifically set aside in the budget for that program. An additional \$35 million is provided to clinical capacity for individuals who are experiencing mental health crises.

Finally, we mandated that the Maryland Department of Health move expeditiously to approve individuals on the waitlist for vital services (SB636/HB1403), expanded the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to cover doula services (SB166/HB765), established a Maryland Pediatric Cancer Fund (SB51), and made it easier for residents to access nicotine replacement therapy medicine (SB62/HB28).

**Giving Marylanders Time to Care:** No one should have to choose between putting food on the table and getting treatment for cancer, caring for their newborn, or comforting a parent during their last days. Soon, Marylanders will no longer have to make that impossible decision as we establish a system for paid medical and family leave that covers all working Marylanders (SB275). The legislation we passed this Session is cost effective and affordable for workers, employers, and the State. It also includes well-established reasons people need family and medical leave while ensuring a substantial amount of wages

during the period of leave. Finally, workers will be protected against adverse consequences for taking leave, while recognizing the impacts employee leave may have on employer operations.

**Urgently Addressing the Climate Crisis and Protecting Our Future:** The climate crisis is having drastic impacts throughout our State as extreme weather increases. We must take bold, but achievable, actions to reduce our emissions as quickly as possible. That's why we passed the Climate Solutions Act of 2022 (SB528) to set bold, aggressive, and practical goals for reducing Maryland's emissions of greenhouse gasses 60% by 2030 and reaching net neutral emissions by 2045. The legislation makes Maryland a national leader in curbing emissions by electrifying our State vehicle fleet and local school buses, financially incentivizing the construction of new net-zero schools, leveraging private funding for green energy investments, and curbing emissions from large buildings over time.

**Supporting Maryland Families and Childcare Providers:** Strong, reliable childcare is a critical piece in addressing the workforce shortage, but financial hardship and under enrollment resulted in Maryland losing nearly 800 licensed childcare facilities during the height of the pandemic. Bolstering our childcare ecosystem for Maryland families was a top priority and we passed a number of bills that remove barriers by improving the childcare scholarship program (SB920/HB995), allocate \$50 million in childcare stabilization grants for providers who have faced financial hardship (SB480/HB89), create a \$35 million revolving loan fund for critical renovations (SB919/HB993), and provide \$16 million to support hiring new employees and retaining existing employees through bonuses (SB806/HB1100). Finally, an additional \$3.7 million is provided to support specialized child care and education to young children with developmental delays and physical disabilities (SB506/HB725).

**Reforming Outdated Policies on Adult-Use Recreational Cannabis:** The issue of legalizing adult-use recreational cannabis was a priority of the General Assembly this Legislative Session. The Senate has always held that Marylanders need to know what they are voting for, and any ballot referendum would need to be accompanied by a robust framework for implementing cannabis legalization. As a result, Marylanders will have the opportunity to vote on a

referendum to legalize adult-use recreational cannabis this upcoming election (HB1) with a clear framework of what that actually means (HB837/SB833). We also included \$53 million in the FY23 State budget for the implementation of cannabis legalization, including \$5.5 million for expungement and funding for a robust business disparity study on the adult-use cannabis industry and market. Next year, should Maryland voters affirm the decision to legalize the adult-use of cannabis, we will finalize the licensing and taxation details of implementation and use the disparity study results to ensure equitable market access. I am excited that the General Assembly took this once-in-a-generation opportunity to address the injustices caused by the past criminalization of cannabis.

**Supporting Reproductive and Maternal Health:** Access to abortion care is becoming an increasingly fraught issue as states across the country have increased restrictions and cases are pending before the Supreme Court of the United States that have the potential to overturn or severely limit *Roe v. Wade*. The Maryland General Assembly passed legislation in 1991 to codify the legal right to abortion, a decision that was ratified by Maryland voters with 62% of the vote. This Session, we specifically focused on ensuring access and equity for those seeking care through the Abortion Care Access Act (SB890/HB937). Two-thirds of Maryland counties do not have qualified providers, an issue we address through expanding the pool of potential qualified providers, scaling up training opportunities for those professionals, and ensuring equity through Medicaid coverage. Fundamentally, reproductive healthcare should be treated like any other kind of care in our State. Further, we expanded the Maryland Medical Assistance Program providing maternal health services to all Maryland residents through the Healthy Babies Equity Act (SB778/HB1080).

**Building World-Class State Parks:** Maryland's state parks are a national treasure, something more of our residents realized as we spent additional time outside throughout the pandemic. Unfortunately, many of our state parks could not accommodate the increased demand by Marylanders due to a backlog of maintenance issues, inadequate staffing, and transportation limitations. In response to record levels of attendance at state parks, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Great Maryland Outdoors Act (SB541) to ensure issues of access are a thing of the past. This critical bill provides funding to address

overcrowding and understaffing, clears a backlog of critical repairs, increases recreational water access, improves accessibility, and creates new state parks in every region of Maryland.

**Modernizing Maryland's Juvenile Justice System:** As Maryland's criminal justice system has evolved in recent years, our juvenile justice system has not kept pace. Too often, when minors encounter the juvenile justice system, they are treated in ways that are not developmentally appropriate and lead to inequitable outcomes that are punitive as opposed to reformative. After years of study, the Maryland General Assembly moved forward with reforms recommended by the State's Juvenile Justice Reform Council to protect children's due process rights when they are taken into custody (SB53/HB269) and comprehensively overhaul our criminal code as applied to children to reflect national best practices (SB691/HB459).

**Extending Housing and Eviction Protections:** Housing insecurity and instability has been at the forefront of our minds throughout the pandemic. Although federal eviction prevention funding has provided a lifeline, we anticipate a drastic rise in eviction filings as that funding is eventually exhausted. This Session, we passed a series of bills to ensure an equitable approach to our housing laws for tenants, including:

- Protecting tenants from unreasonable or arbitrary deductions by requiring landlords to provide supporting documentation (SB6/HB86);
- Requiring judges to pause eviction proceedings when the tenant provides evidence that a request for rental assistance is pending (SB384/HB674);
- Ensuring any landlord seeking an eviction order has a valid rental license (SB563/HB703); and
- Providing \$14 million to fund the Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund that was created last Session to level the playing field regarding legal representation in eviction proceedings (SB662/HB724).

**Increasing Access to the Ballot Box:** As states around the country move to restrict voting rights, Maryland continued to focus on making it easier for all eligible voters to have voices heard. Mail-in voting is continuing to gain in popularity and we made sure that voters who forget to sign their mail-in ballot have

the opportunity to fix, or "cure," it in time for that vote to be counted. In addition, we allowed local boards of elections to begin canvassing mail-in ballots ahead of Election Day to avoid delays in communicating results (SB163/HB682). Finally, we codified the cost-split between the State and our local jurisdictions relating to administering elections to maintain robust access through minimizing expenses.

**Supporting Maryland Workers and a Living Wage:** Rising income inequality, heightened by the pandemic, continues to be one of the most consequential issues we face. Unions have long been one of the most effective tools for building our State and nation's middle class and protecting economic opportunities for all. Collective bargaining is a vital tool in leveling the playing field, which is why we expanded the ability to collectively bargain to the Maryland Office of the Public Defender (SB255/HB90) and supervisors and sergeants in the Maryland Transit Administration Police (SB475/HB580). We also passed key bills to expand the applicability of a prevailing and family-sustaining wage (SB259/HB611), as well as our ability to enforce those requirements (SB1/HB145).

**Celebrating Black History:** Maryland, like the rest of the country, owes an immense debt of gratitude and recognition to our Black residents. Black History Month is critical, but insufficient, to recognizing those contributions that literally built our State and nation, as well as the heroic actions of Black servicemen and women who fought and died for our national interests. It's rare that the Maryland General Assembly creates new commemorative days in statute, however we codified Juneteenth National Independence Day (HB227) and Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day (SB5/HB479) in an effort to acknowledge those legacies.

**Developing a 21st Century Workforce:** Small businesses and industries in every economic sector have dealt with workforce shortages in recent months. Although there is no one cause, we know there is a massive gap between the job requirements and skills in a 21st century economy, and people trained to meet those prerequisites. To help alleviate those issues, the Maryland General Assembly passed a number of bills to increase opportunity through drastically scaling up apprenticeship training programs across the State (SB926) and connect more young people to those experiences (SB420). We also expanded the

applicability of the tax credit to employers who hire individuals with disabilities to make those jobs more accessible (SB93).

**Prioritizing Public Service:** The fabric of our civic society has been fraying for years because we tend to silo ourselves in like-minded communities with others of similar backgrounds. Democracies thrive when a marketplace of ideas exists, and individuals communicate and work together across lines of difference. Service is a powerful tool for bringing people together with a shared purpose and vision for what's possible. The Maryland General Assembly expanded the State's Maryland Corps program through funding that will eventually reach \$20 million per year in an effort to increase accessibility so anyone who wants to serve has the ability to do so (SB228). We also recognized the service of Peace Corps volunteers and incentivized them to come to Maryland once they

return by allowing them to access in-state tuition at any State higher education institution (SB50/HB87).

**Bolstering Cybersecurity:** The downage on the Maryland Department of Health's website at the beginning of the Omicron wave underscored the urgent need to enhance Maryland's cybersecurity apparatus, funding, and procedures. The Maryland General Assembly worked with the Governor's office and State agencies to fund the Cyber Preparedness Unit within the MD Department of Emergency Management (SB754/HB1202), develop a long-term plan to update IT systems and local governments pay for upgrades (SB811/HB1205), and centralize authority with the MD Department of Information Technology including regular risk assessments (SB812/HB1346). In addition, the FY 2023 operating budget includes \$570 million for proactive cyber infrastructure investments to immediately fend off potential attacks.

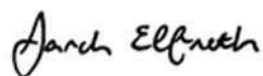
#### **In Closing – Thank you**

The adjourning, *sine die*, of the 2022 legislative session marks the final session of my first as your Senator. Over the past four years I am proud to have helped thousands of constituents navigate and find solutions in State Government, worked across the aisle to pass over 65 pieces of legislation that reflect the values of our community, and bring home tens of millions of dollars to directly support our District's priorities. 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 this community work and constituent services, I will also spend time as the Chair of the tri-state Chesapeake Bay Commission, working with colleagues in Pennsylvania and Virginia to find bipartisan, regional policy solutions for protecting our greatest natural resource.

Thank you for the privilege of representing you in the Maryland Senate, 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 410-841-3578 or by sending an email to [sarah.elfreth@senate.state.md.us](mailto:sarah.elfreth@senate.state.md.us).

Sincerely,



Sarah Elfreth  
Senator, District 30