

**SENATOR SARAH ELFRETH**

*Legislative District 30*  
Anne Arundel County

Budget and Taxation Committee

*Subcommittees*

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



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 103  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3578 · 301-858-3578  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3578  
Fax 410-841-3156 · 301-858-3156  
Sarah.Elfreth@senate.state.md.us

## THE SENATE OF MARYLAND

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Dear Neighbor,

The Maryland General Assembly's 441<sup>st</sup> Legislative Session adjourned at midnight on April 12th. From the moment the gavel fell in January and for every one of the 89 days that followed, my colleagues and I were hyper-focused on working together to solve the compounding crises facing our State and communities. It was a session unlike any other and I believe we did our utmost to find solutions, highlighted in this letter, to the challenges facing Maryland. With the help of my talented team, our office responded to and solved hundreds of constituent cases, passed 19 pieces of legislation with bipartisan support, restored the payment-in-lieu of taxes funding to the City of Annapolis, and brought home over \$10 million in investments to help spur the economy and support local nonprofits, museums, parks, and community centers.

The legislature's priority throughout the session remained responding urgently to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the public health and economic consequences it brought to bear. We worked to address longstanding disparities in health outcomes, employment and opportunity, and educational achievement that have been drastically exacerbated over the last year. We provided immediate financial support to our most vulnerable residents, improved Maryland's vaccine rollout, passed a generational police reform package, provided funding to reverse COVID-19 learning loss, made historic investments in public green spaces and parks, and passed a budget that will create good jobs and get Marylanders back to work.

We have tried to condense that work into this end-of-session letter. In seven pages, you will find updates on constituent casework, legislation I authored, Maryland's balanced budget, the capital funding we are bringing home, 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.

### Constituent Services and COVID-19

Our office is focused on helping thousands of District 30 residents, particularly those most vulnerable to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the last 90 days alone, we were able to advocate for over 275 constituents on behalf of their unemployment insurance claims, and are proud of our 100% success rate resolving these cases. Maryland's vaccination rollout presented additional challenges, and our relationships with the County Department of Health and other vaccine experts allowed our team to help teachers, first responders, and seniors secure safe access to vaccine opportunities as quickly as possible. We continued to focus on helping our small businesses and local organizations remain viable by sharing grant opportunities and economic relief packages made available through State and County grants - in some cases successfully advocating to change policy in order to help more businesses. District 30 constituents are at the heart of our office operations and we look forward to finding ways to support every District 30 constituent by partnering with State, County, and City teams to best serve you.

### 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 19 of the 27 pieces of legislation I introduced have passed, all with bipartisan votes. Here are some of the most impactful bills that are now on the Governor's desk:

**Digital Connectivity Act of 2021** (SB66/HB97): Creates the Office of Statewide Broadband (similar to 27 other states) and ensures that every Marylander has access to high-speed internet by 2026. The Office will conduct a thorough audit of access, affordability, and speed, work with community partners and local governments, and deploy \$300 million in recent Federal stimulus money to help jumpstart this initiative. Simply put: this legislation provides a desperately needed statewide approach to digital connectivity and is essential for education, telehealth, and our economy.

**Public Health - Maryland Prenatal and Infant Care Grant Program Fund** (SB777/HB1349): Accessible, quality prenatal care ensures healthy moms, healthy pregnancies, and healthy babies. Yet too many Maryland mothers lack access to this essential preventative care, resulting in unacceptably high rates of infant and maternal mortality. This legislation will secure millions of dollars for critical prenatal care for expecting mothers across the State.

**Water Pollution - Stormwater Management Regulations and Watershed Implementations Plans - Review and Update** (SB227/HB295): Currently, the State's guidance to localities on stormwater management relies on decades-old precipitation data and outdated standards. This legislation requires both immediate and regular updates to that data and to our Watershed Implementation Plans to ensure we are properly mitigating the effects of increased rain events and flooding.

**Public Schools - Provision of Menstrual Hygiene Products - Requirements** (SB427/HB205): Menstrual equity has always been an important issue - but it's been made more critical as we see two economies emerge from this pandemic. Like many folks in our community, I spent the last year lending a hand at food distribution lines across the District and saw firsthand that, after protein and diapers, menstrual products were in high demand. That's because these products are often the last thing a family can afford when experiencing poverty. This legislation will address period poverty head-on by requiring and funding each public school provide, at no charge to students, menstrual hygiene products via dispensers in the restrooms at the school.

**Maryland 529 Program - Board Authority and State Contribution - Alterations** (SB779/HB1238): Addresses significant loopholes in Maryland's 529 plan by combatting significant waste, fraud, and abuse. The bill secures the program's integrity, ensures that Maryland's program is still the most generous in the nation, and will save the State \$3 million dollars annually.

**Criminal Law - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Sexual Activity** (SB43/HB411): Expands the law prohibiting law enforcement officers from having sexual activity with inmates to include any person in their custody, any person they interact with during the course of an investigation, or any one requesting assistance from the law enforcement officer.

**Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act** (SB283/HB156): Makes it easier for both college students and active-duty military members to vote by: allowing military members to sign necessary voting forms with their common access card; requiring the Board of Elections to seek input from large residential institutions (such as colleges and retirement communities) when selecting voting sites; and, requiring colleges to develop a student vote plan to foster civic engagement.

**Transfer with Success Act** (SB886/HB460): Ensures that our community college students are able to transfer as many credits as possible to an in-state university by requiring essential coordination amongst all our post-secondary institutions.

**Maryland Arts and Cultural Capital Grant Program** (SB323/HB310): Creates a competitive grant to support smaller arts and cultural organizations, such as Maryland Hall, to provide millions of dollars of critical capital funding.

**Environment and Natural Resources - Complaints, Inspections, and Enforcement - Information Maintenance and Reporting** (SB324/HB204): Ensures that the Department of Environment and the Department of Natural Resources are transparent in the data they share with the public concerning violations of environmental and conservation laws. This will enable environmental advocates and Marylanders to better advocate for the health and safety of our communities.

**Environment - Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities - Reform** (SB674/HB1207): The State's Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities has the potential to serve as a data-driven and community-oriented group focused on delivering strong policy recommendations on environmental justice. This legislation expands the membership to include those who come from underserved communities, revises the mission, and equips the Commission with the tools necessary to do its critical work.

**Board of Public Works Budget Reduction Clarification Act** (SB30/HB133): Clarifies that the Board of Public Works can only reduce a department or agency's budget by 25% in any given year and requires the Board to publicize proposed cuts further in advance to ensure transparency. The legislation ensures that difficult budget decisions are made responsibly, with enough time for public input, and without eliminating programs or changing policy.

**Property Tax Credit - Business Entities - State of Emergency** (SB887/HB1137): The small businesses that make up the backbone of our communities are struggling in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This legislation enables municipalities and counties to implement tax credits for small businesses during States of Emergency.

**Anne Arundel County – Hotel Tax Alterations – Distribution of Revenue** (SB529/HB901): Brings greater transparency and accountability to Visit Annapolis by requiring annual audits and greater oversight by the General Assembly, Anne Arundel County Council, and Annapolis City Council. The bill also directs hotel tax revenue to public art and affordable housing in Annapolis.

**Health Occupations - State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners - Revisions** (SB745/HB1039): Modernizes State code by replacing out-of-date and stigmatizing language like "massage parlors" so that massage therapy establishments are recognized as

licensed, regulated health care and wellness businesses. This bill also ensures criminal background checks are completed in a transparent and regular manner and updates licensing certification requirements so that they are aligned across the state.

**State Retirement and Pension System - COVID-19-Related Death Benefits** (SB642/HB922): Maryland's public employees have been on the frontlines of service during this pandemic. This legislation provides line-of-duty death benefits to State employees in the unfortunate scenario that they pass away from COVID-19 while in service to our State.

**Regional Institution Strategic Enterprise Zone Program - Alterations** (SB778/HB1279): Maryland's underutilized RISE Zone Program helps incentivize small businesses and start-ups in areas surrounding our Maryland's colleges and universities. This legislation ensures that the program is achieving its fullest potential and helping to jumpstart our innovation economy.

### **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.

The uncertainty about Maryland's budget over the last year created a concerning dynamic as we entered Session in January. Fortunately, the most recent revenue and budget projections are more optimistic than we could have expected, though financial impacts have been disparately felt. Ultimately, the MGA passed a \$52.4 billion budget that invests heavily in Maryland values, including:

- \$572M to expand testing, contact tracing, and vaccinations;
- \$13.5B in Medicaid funding to provide health care coverage to 1.5 million residents;
- \$760,500 in direct support to the City of Annapolis through the payment-in-lieu-of-taxes
- \$1.6B to ensure solvency of the Transportation and Unemployment Insurance Trust Funds;
- \$600M to reopen schools safely, including \$80 million for HVAC and ventilation improvements;
- \$371.5M for Maryland's community colleges, representing a 9% increase over FY21;
- \$85M for local parks and playgrounds throughout the State; and
- \$2.1B in cash reserves, including \$1.4B in the Rainy Day Fund and \$696M in the General Fund that erases projected budget shortfalls in FY23 and FY24.

The General Assembly also worked with the Governor to invest nearly \$4.5 billion in capital funds this year to get Marylanders back to work. The FY22 capital budget is projected to create nearly 30,000 jobs at a time when unemployment rates are still unacceptably high as we rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic. That funding will provide a critical lifeline to our local institutions and invest State dollars in our community. I am proud to report that over \$10 million in projects were funded throughout District 30, including:

- Mayo American Legion Post 226 - \$40,000
- Edgewater Community Garden - \$10,000
- Banneker-Douglass Museum - \$75,000
- Chesapeake Children's Museum - \$25,000
- Chesapeake Region Accessible Boating Center - \$325,000
- PAL Park Field - \$45,000
- Peerless Rens Club - \$70,000
- Shady Side Community Center - \$37,000
- Stanton Community Center - \$500,000
- YWCA Domestic Violence Safe House - \$100,000
- Local Parks and Playgrounds - \$9,000,000 for Anne Arundel County and \$1,000,000 for the City of Annapolis
- City Dock Stormwater & Flood Mitigation - \$1,400,000
- Brewer Hill Cemetery - \$100,000
- Historic Annapolis - \$1,000,000
- St. Johns College Renovations - \$5,000,000
- Undergrounding of Utilities - \$250,000
- Anne Arundel Medical Center - \$336,000

### **Full Session Update**

In total, over 2,000 pieces of legislation introduced this legislative session. The General Assembly worked together and we took momentous action to push our State forward - please find a full update below as to what we were able to accomplish over these past 90 days:

**Immediate and Sustainable Financial RELIEF & Recovery:** The first bill passed this Session was the RELIEF Act (SB496), including the MGA's Recovery Now package, to provide over \$1 billion economic stimulus to vulnerable Maryland residents, small businesses, and nonprofits hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The State has since established the Recovery Now Fund and programs, like \$83 million to erase

household utility debt and \$279 million for small business support, which have already started distributing vital financial support. Because of the Maryland Senate's efforts, nearly 40,000 Marylanders who were stuck in Unemployment Insurance purgatory have already received an immediate \$1,000 direct payment to help them survive this crisis as their cases are adjudicated.

Also included in the RELIEF Act was an historic expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), one of the best anti-poverty tools our State has, for the next three years. We expanded eligibility of both the EITC and Child Tax Credit (SB218) to all taxpaying Marylanders to ensure all who contribute to our State can access these vital credits. When taken together, this stimulus package will allow Maryland to build back stronger from this pandemic.

**Vaccine Access, Efficiency, and Transparency Improved:**

As Maryland's vaccine rollout began in December, it became evident that the State was not reaching its potential. Although the Governor and Maryland Department of Health (MDH) are tasked with vaccine distribution, the Senate took up its oversight role immediately after Session began by creating the Senate Vaccine Oversight Workgroup.

Through weekly meetings with MDH Secretary Schrader, the Senate was able to push the State towards a more accessible, efficient, transparent, and centralized model. Those achievements include the launch of mass vaccination sites; creation of statewide phone number for vaccine appointment signups; establishment of statewide sign up system for mass vaccination sites; disclosure of county by county and site specific data; release of the Vaccine Equity Task Force Operations plan; and community-based priority appointments for mass vaccination sites. Further, the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 781 - *COVID-19 Testing, Contact Tracing, and Vaccination Act of 2021* to ensure Maryland's vaccine program meets its fullest potential through the duration of this pandemic.

**Bridging Maryland's Digital Divide:** Access to reliable broadband and devices that connect to the internet has been a fundamental challenge for Maryland families and small businesses throughout the COVID-19 crisis. This lack of reliable and affordable internet access has led to some of the disparities we have seen in educational outcomes and businesses' ability to adapt. To urgently address this digital divide, Maryland is using \$300 million in federal funds to connect 567,000 people to the internet through infrastructure investments to expand broadband, a monthly subsidy to pay for internet service, and funding for free devices to connect to the internet (HB588). Further, we passed my bill to establish an Office of Statewide Broadband within the Department of Housing and Community Development to create and implement a statewide plan for broadband expansion, especially in rural areas (SB66).

**Urgently Addressing Climate Change:** Climate change is one of the largest threats to humanity and we must act urgently to address it. Bold action will improve Marylanders' health, protect our State's biodiversity, and conserve the land we inhabit. That is why the Senate passed

*Climate Solutions Now Act of 2021* (SB414), to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions compared by 60% by 2030, plant 5 million trees, provide funding for electric buses and vehicles, and require new school buildings to meet net-zero energy requirements. Ultimately, the Senate and House could not reach consensus after the House amendments stripped much of the bill, but it will be back next year for further consideration.

Still, the MGA passed a number of critical bills to protect the environment. This Session, we removed black liquor from Maryland's subsidized Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards (RPS) and invested in solar and hydropower (SB65), added geothermal heating and cooling systems to our RPS (HB1007), advanced stand-alone legislation to move our public transit fleet to zero-emission vehicles (SB137), and ensure that we plant 5 Million trees over the next few years (HB991).

**Expanding Access to Telehealth:** The pandemic has caused many day-to-day services to shift to a virtual format, including telehealth and telemedicine services. For many of Maryland's patients and healthcare providers, telehealth has improved access to care and increased convenience, all while operating in a safe and distanced way. To preserve and extend the efficiency, safety, and ease of access to telehealth services that have been so vital since the beginning of the pandemic, we passed the *Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021* (SB3). Those services are also vital for our most vulnerable students, which is why we expanded equitable telehealth access for those students who have been unable to receive in-school healthcare services (SB278).

**Generational Reforms to Policing in Maryland:** One of, if not the most, complex issues facing the MGA this year was reforming policing in Maryland to restore trust, transparency, and accountability. The process of shaping the legislative package began last summer to assure we passed a package that would increase public safety for all Marylanders, police included. After overriding the vetoes of three of the five bills in the final days of Session, all five bills in the package will become law. That package of five includes legislation that will:

- Increase body worn cameras, establish a use of force policy, and provide mental health supports for officers (SB71);
- Create transparency in the disciplinary process and curtail no knock warrants (SB178);
- Demilitarize the police and independently investigate police-involved deaths (SB600);
- Repeal and replace the Law Enforcement Officer's Bill of Rights, and create a Law Enforcement Scholarship Program (HB670).

**Fixing a Broken Unemployment Insurance System:** Over the last year, every legislative office has been inundated by Marylanders unable to access rightful Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits. Although the COVID-19 pandemic is a once-in-a-100-year crisis, government must be a mechanism to support people facing hardship. In addition to providing \$1,000 checks to thousands of Marylanders unfairly caught in UI purgatory (SB496), we also passed a comprehensive set of reforms (SB771, SB816, SB817, SB818, SB819, and SB893) to fix the broken system. These bills will allow Marylanders to more easily access the money they deserve, improve their customer service experience from start to finish, and ensure the Department of Labor is prepared for the next emergency. We also passed legislation to help businesses defray the costs of small businesses paying into the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund to provide additional aid as they recover from COVID-19 (SB811). Lastly, I was proud to offer an amendment to the budget to ensure that the mobile application used by Marylanders for their UI claims is properly updated.

**Protecting Tenants and Expanding Affordable Housing:** Throughout the past year we saw far too many Marylanders struggle to pay rent and their mortgage, however, through Federal, State, and County assistance funding and eviction moratoriums, many were able to get the necessary relief they so desperately needed to keep roofs over heads. The MGA also took action to ensure that tenants facing eviction have access to counsel to aid them through court proceedings and included \$18 million in the RELIEF Act for legal assistance and emergency housing support. As a member of the Budget and Taxation Committee, we also secured over \$50 million for the expansion of affordable housing in Maryland.

**Reversing COVID-19 Learning Loss:** Despite herculean efforts by teachers across Maryland to reach students through distance learning, prolonged disruptions to our public education system have resulted in immeasurable learning loss. Fortunately, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future passed by the MGA last year sets forth a framework for getting our students back on track. The MGA passed a "Blueprint 2.0" (HB1372) this Session to fund intensive tutoring and summer school to improve educational outcomes, add money to the State's base education formula for educational technology, support students' socio-emotional health, and ensure the responsible use of federal funds.

**Emphasizing Equity in Environment Justice, Health, and Economic Opportunities:** Last year, the Senate President's Advisory Workgroup on Equity and Inclusion was formed to make recommendations in the areas of environmental justice, health disparities, and economic opportunities and wealth-building. I was proud to be a member of this

Workgroup and we developed a strong final report detailing its recommendations, many of which were developed into legislation that was passed this Session, including:

- My bill to reform the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities to be more representative of the diversity of our State (SB674);
- Addressing health disparities by providing additional resources to neighborhoods with a history of documented health outcomes below surrounding areas (SB172);
- My bill to expand funding for mothers to receive prenatal care (SB777) and postpartum services (SB923)
- Increasing opportunities and support for Maryland's Minority Business Enterprises (SB689, SB909).

**Expanding Voting Rights in Maryland:** As states around the country move to restrict voting rights, Maryland focused on making it easier for all eligible voters to make their voices heard. Mail-in voting was highly effective and secure in 2020 – with no verified cases of voter fraud – so we created a Permanent Absentee Ballot List with mail-in ballot applications going out to all registered voters in 2022 and 2024 to make it easier to vote by mail (SB683). As voting early has become increasingly popular, we also expanded the number of Early Vote sites in almost every jurisdiction (HB745). Recognizing that expanded voting options are most efficient when convenient, we also included guardrails in both bills to ensure Early Vote sites and ballot drop boxes are equitably distributed, as well as strategically placed to maximize ease of access.

**Historic Investment in Maryland's HBCUs:** Maryland's Historically Black Colleges and Universities are vital to our higher education ecosystem. Maryland will invest an historic \$577 million in our HBCUs over the next decade to end a fifteen year legal battle with the State around program duplication (SB1). This funding will strengthen the State's entire higher education landscape and provide the needed resources for our HBCUs to develop and enhance high-demand programs for Maryland's 21st Century economy.

**Building Safer Maryland Neighborhoods:** Every single resident of our State deserves to feel secure in their community. Though crime rates decreased in a number of categories over the last year, violent crime remains unacceptably high. The MGA overrode a number of vetoes in February to make targeted, data-driven investments in violence intervention and prevention programming (SB708), create a statewide crime plan (SB907), and increase coordination between State and local agencies (SB929). Additionally, the Senate passed legislation this

Session strengthening sentencing options for repeat violent offenders who use a firearm in the commission of the crime (SB852) and expanding educational and vocational training opportunities for individuals re-entering society to minimize recidivism (SB800).

**Creating a More Equitable Criminal Justice System:** Reforms to our criminal justice system are desperately needed so that it serves all Marylanders fairly and justly. The MGA continues to make significant strides towards a more equitable and effective system, including overriding vetoes of 2020 legislation to create parity in prerelease services (SB684), remove minor marijuana charges from Maryland's case search (HB83), and expand expungement for low level offenses to increase employment opportunities (HB1336). Building off that success, this Session we passed legislation to compensate wrongly-convicted and incarcerated Marylanders (SB14), remove the Governor and politics from Maryland's parole process (SB202), strengthen and clarify the role of the *Workgroup to Study Partial Expungement* (SB874), and through the *Juvenile Restoration Act*, end sentences of life without the possibility of parole for minors except under certain circumstances (SB494).

**Supporting Maryland Workers and a Living Wage:** Rising income inequality continues to be one of the most consequential issues we face as a society that strives for equal opportunity. Unions have long been one of the most effective tools for building our State and nation's middle class. Collective bargaining is a vital tool in leveling the playing field, which is why we strengthened our State's unions' ability to organize and negotiate at the University System of Maryland (SB9) and our community colleges (SB746), in addition to mandating that large state-funded capital projects pay a prevailing and family-sustaining wage (SB35).

**Investing in Public Transit:** Maryland's public transit infrastructure is struggling to keep pace with necessary repairs and faced severe disruptions at a time when our essential workers have been reliant on consistent service. The Maryland Transit Authority identified substantial budget gaps necessary to maintain operations due to underfunding and deferred maintenance. The *Transit Safety and Investment Act* (SB199) puts Maryland back on a path to sustainable transit operations.

**Repealing Maryland's Confederate State Song:** Our State's symbols matter, including our state song, and they must reflect our values. The Senate of Maryland spoke with one voice and unanimously voted to abolish "Maryland, My Maryland" as the State song. As catchy as the chorus may be, the vast majority of lyrics are pro-secessionist and contrary to the values we hold as a community today. This isn't "cancel culture" - this is choosing what values to enshrine and not enshrine in law. I'm proud that we can take

this positive step forward and next work to designate a State song that fits today's culture, diversity, and vibrancy of Maryland. (SB8).

**Supporting Maryland's Local Restaurants:** Maryland's local restaurants and bars have been some of the hardest hit businesses by the COVID-19 pandemic. Adjusting to solely carryout and delivery models, and operating at lower capacities has impacted bottom lines to a point that threatens their survival. Allowing for sale of alcoholic beverages like wine, beer, and cocktails for off-premises consumption has been a lifeline for many of these businesses and SB205 will allow that practice to temporarily continue so our restaurants and bars can make it to the other side of this crisis.

**Supporting Local Departments of Health:** The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for competent and effective public health programming at the local level. We have relied on our local health departments to support the Statewide vaccination campaign and roll-out, and these departments have played a crucial role in getting shots into the arms of Marylanders. The Senate passed a measure to provide State funding to ensure that all local health departments are adequately funded to both meet the moment and continue to protect the health of Marylanders after the pandemic is over (SB563). Additionally, the *COVID-19 Testing, Contact Tracing, and Vaccination Act of 2021* (SB741) will require the Maryland Department of Health to partner with local health departments to adopt and implement a two-year plan to monitor and mitigate the spread of the coronavirus.

**Restoring Trust in Public Service:** Last year, the Maryland Environmental Service (MES) scandal involving a payout to an employee moving into another high-paid government job required immediate action. The General Assembly passed the *Maryland Environmental Service Reform Act of 2021* (SB2), reforming MES's structure and operations to ensure that similar reimbursements and severance will never happen again. We also passed legislation tightening ethics laws so that State employees will not face retaliation for reporting wrongdoing (SB4) and requiring the State to update payment data on a searchable website on a monthly basis, providing accountability and transparency for how State funds are deployed (SB244).

The flaws in Maryland's procurement process were also exposed over the last year. We passed legislation to ensure the Board of Public Works provides checks and balances to large procurement contracts (SB30), provide greater public transparency as those contracts are being finalized (SB780), and ensure there is equitable access and opportunity for Small, Minority, and Women-owned businesses (HB1091).

**National Leadership in Health and Mental Health Care:**

Maryland has been a national leader in health care expansion for years and we continued to make strides this Session. The General Assembly passed measures to expand minors' access to critically needed mental health services (SB41), tighten standards for Alzheimer's special care units in assisted living programs (SB204), and improve medication accessibility by allowing pharmacists to administer specific injectable medications (SB84).

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted the mental health of many of our fellow Marylanders. In that vein, the legislature swiftly passed the Thomas Bloom Raskin Act to ensure that our 2-1-1 system can properly help those struggling in difficult situations (SB719).

**Increasing Efficacy of Special and Early Childhood Education:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has hurt our special education students and youngest learners especially hard. This Session, the MGA passed measures to make our special education system more effective and efficient for Maryland families who have lacked necessary services due to distance learning (SB371), as well as to grow our child care workforce to meet demand (SB436). Additionally we took keen action to provide millions of dollars of support directly to nonpublic special education schools to more fairly compensate educators and support staff (SB958).

**Ending Price Gouging by Third-Party Energy Suppliers:**

Maryland's deregulated electricity and natural gas market has prompted some third-party energy suppliers to drive up

prices, locking Maryland's families into expensive contracts. The MGA addressed this price gouging by passing legislation requiring the Public Service Commission to approve the pricing of third-party energy suppliers before they offer services to Marylanders who get energy assistance payments (SB31).

**Protecting Maryland's Pedestrians:** Keeping our streets safe for everyone - including walkers, bikers, public safety personnel, and road workers - is a key part of public safety in Maryland. The MGA passed legislation to close a loophole that meant drivers who caused serious physical injury or death to a pedestrian weren't charged with a crime (SB293). It is past time we protect pedestrians by deterring distracted driving.

**Additional Veto Overrides from 2020 Session Legislation:**

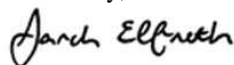
The abrupt end to the 2020 Legislative Session and inability for the MGA to reconvene for a Special Session due to health conditions meant we had an abnormal number of veto overrides to consider when entering the 2021 Session. In addition to those mentioned in other sections of this letter, the MGA overrode vetoes on the Blueprint for Maryland's Future to pass generational reforms and investments to our public education system (HB1300), close the long gun background check loophole (SB208), lower the cost of prescription drugs in Maryland (SB669), and ensure that massive tech companies who profit from our private data pay taxes in Maryland, just like our small businesses (HB732).

**In Closing – Thank you**

With the legislative session now adjourned, vaccinations increasing daily, and Maryland hopefully returning to normalcy, I will continue to host community events and town halls (both virtually and outdoors) to make sure that I remain as accessible as possible to you. I would be remiss if I did not thank my team, Dylan, Jennifer, and Ayia, and our interns, Malik and Allison, for their tireless work on behalf of the District. I also owe a great deal of appreciation and thanks to my District teammates, Delegate Shaneka Henson, Delegate Dana Jones, and Delegate Seth Howard for their partnership.

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, 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, Maryland's District 30