



Dear Friend,

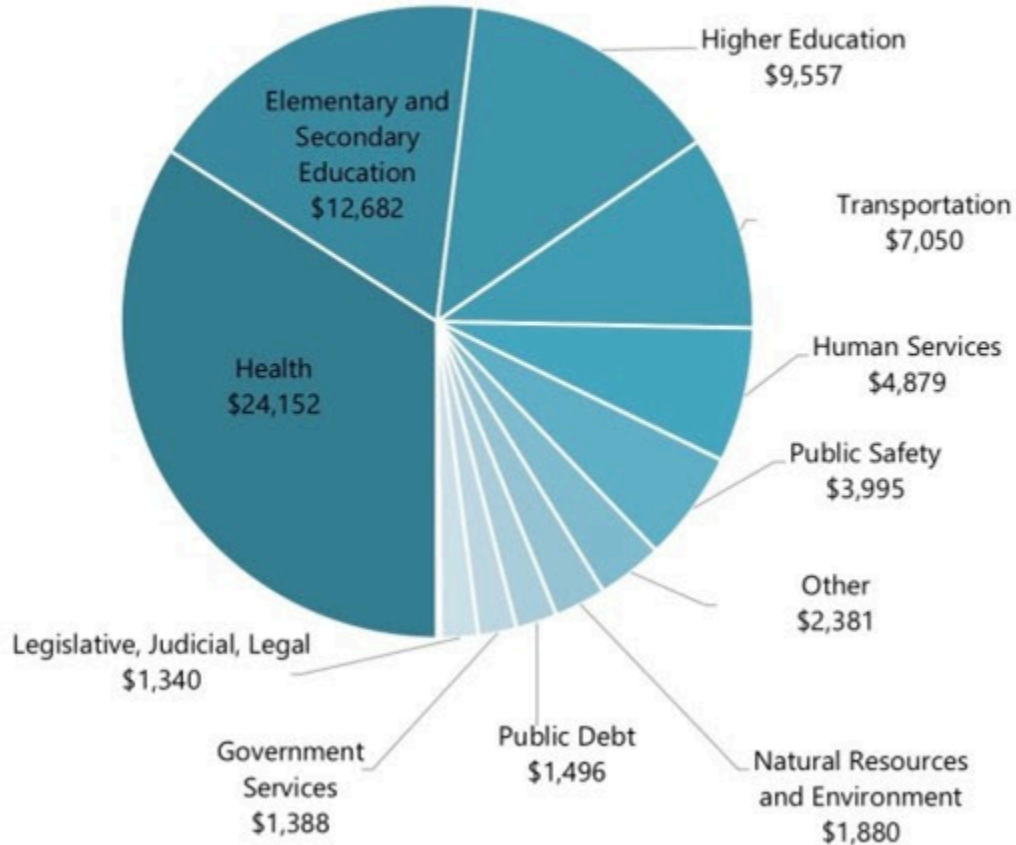
January 14th marked the first day of the 449th Session of the Maryland General Assembly. It is an honor to return to Annapolis to represent you in the Maryland State Senate. This Session begins my fourth year as Chair of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee (Committee), which reviews legislation not only related to education, energy, and environmental policy, but also to cybersecurity, information technology, election law, agriculture, affordable housing, and natural resources. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Committee as we discuss and formulate public policy within all these important subject areas.

Please take a moment to read the information below and, as always, do not hesitate to contact me with your comments, questions, or concerns at: Brian.Feldman@senate.maryland.gov.

Governor Moore's Proposed Budget: Fiscal Year 2027

Expenditures FY2027 (\$ in millions):

EXPENDITURES



Source: Maryland Department of Budget and Management, *Maryland Budget Highlights*, Fiscal Year 2027

Each year, as required by the Maryland Constitution, the State must pass a balanced budget by the conclusion of the legislative session. The proposed budget is a tangible reflection of Maryland's policy priorities. The State is on track to spend over \$70.8 billion in Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) to fund critical programs in the fields of education, environmental protection, public health, public safety, transportation, and others. The unfortunate reality of losing 25,000 Federal jobs in Maryland last year, and the effects of a softened economy, has left Maryland with an approximately \$1.5 billion budget gap. The Governor's proposal includes incentives to grow the

economy while closing the deficit by utilizing \$900 million in cuts and fund transfers, without raising taxes or increasing fees.

The proposed budget includes a record \$10.2 billion in K-12 education to strengthen our public school system and maintain funding for the Maryland Blueprint Initiative (Blueprint), the plan to transform our public education system. \$10.9 million will go towards the Academic Excellence Fund, which will support coaches in literacy and math in public schools. Funding allocations will also go to supporting local school districts' efforts to carry out the Blueprint's mission. This includes bolstering early childhood education, promoting high quality and diverse faculty, college and career readiness, increasing student resources, and enhancing governance and accountability. In addition, \$572 million will go toward the Concentration of Poverty grant, which is a 16% increase from the past year.

Governor Moore is also prioritizing a cleaner, more affordable energy future for Maryland by designating \$306 million for renewable and clean energy programs. These initiatives will be overseen by the Maryland Energy Administration and will help keep Maryland on track to reach our climate goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2031, 100% by 2045, as well as achieving 100% clean energy by 2035.

Housing insecurity has been a long-standing concern for Marylanders. Governor Moore's budget addresses housing shortages and aims to reduce costs for renters and first-time home buyers by allocating \$352 million in expanding housing supply and community revitalization projects to meet affordable housing needs. This includes \$65 million for Rental Housing Works, which provides gap financing for affordable rentals, \$8 million for the Partnership Rental Housing program, which provides loans for rental housing for low-income households, and \$20 million for Homeownership Programs, which provide down payment assistance.

I want to emphasize that the Governor's budget is still in its proposal stage and will be thoroughly vetted by the Budget & Taxation Committee before it comes to the full Senate for consideration. One line item of concern is the proposed "cost containment" of \$150 million to the Development Disabilities Administration. As a lifelong supporter of the disability community, I have consistently advocated for children and adults with developmental disabilities, and I continue to be committed to making sure we provide the necessary support they need. Any proposed budget cuts must be carefully considered, and extra attention must be paid when these changes negatively impact programs that support the daily wellbeing of vulnerable populations, like those with developmental disabilities and their caregivers.

Maryland continues to possess an exceptionally strong financial foundation, retaining top-tier AAA status from both Fitch Ratings and S&P Global Ratings. While Moody's Ratings adjusted its rating to Aa1, the State remains securely in the high-grade category, demonstrating long-term resilience and a strong commitment to managing its fiscal outlook.

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

My role as Chair of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee keeps me extremely busy and engaged in some of the most impactful legislation that is before the General Assembly. Bill hearings have already begun, and the Committee has been briefed by several agencies and commissions on energy policy, the regional electric grid, housing policies, and amendments to election laws. At this time, 27 bills have already been assigned to my Committee and each bill will have a public hearing and be fully reviewed before Sine Die, the last day of Session.

Energy and the Environment

As a nation, and here in Maryland, our energy consumption is on the rise and is projected to rapidly increase. Consumers are grappling with the increased cost of electricity, while at the same time, we remain committed to reaching our climate goals. This Session, the Committee will review legislation that will address the affordability of energy while minimizing any adverse effects to the environment. The Committee will also tackle the topic of data centers and how to regulate them. These weighty issues are at the forefront of my mind, and I will strive to find the right balance to ensure that energy for Marylanders is **affordable, reliable, and predictable and that our fragile environment is protected.**

Elections

The Committee will be focusing their attention on a large number of election bills that have been introduced this Session. To date, we have already passed two important bills on the topic.

One initiative, [Senate Bill 5](#), is a proposed Constitutional Amendment. If the bill passes both chambers and is signed by the Governor, the Amendment will appear on the November ballot, allowing voters to weigh-in whether a special election should be held in the event of an office vacancy in the Maryland General Assembly. Currently, in the event of a vacancy, our State Constitution requires that the Governor appoint a person to serve the remainder of the Senator's or Delegate's unexpired term. The goal of the bill is to strengthen representative democracy.

The second election bill that has passed the Senate, [Senate Bill 29](#), requires that ballot questions before the voters must include an accurate summary of the petition's provisions, using plain language. This legislation serves to enhance voters' understanding of petitions and ballot questions, ensuring that they can make well-informed voting decisions.

Immigration

During my tenure in the Maryland General Assembly, I have long supported policies to protect our immigrant communities and due process. This Session, the Senate has passed two bills that address the extreme actions of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Department of Homeland Security.

1. [Senate Bill 1](#) requires, for increased transparency purposes, the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a uniform policy that prohibits law enforcement officers from wearing face coverings while on duty, with exceptions for undercover operations, health-related purposes, and several other circumstances.
2. [Senate Bill 245](#), emergency legislation that will go into effect as soon as the bill passes both chambers and is signed by the Governor, will no longer allow local law enforcement to essentially be deputized as federal immigration and ICE agents. It prohibits State and local law enforcement from entering into an immigration enforcement agreement with ICE.

As always, thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you in Annapolis. I value your feedback and encourage you to contact me with any questions, comments, or concerns at:

Brian.Feldman@senate.maryland.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian", written in a cursive style.

RESOURCES

211 Hotline:

211 Maryland is a comprehensive, confidential, free service that connects Maryland residents to over 7,500 human and health resources.

For immediate, emergency assistance including housing, utility assistance, and other essential health and human services, please dial **2-1-1** to access the 24/7 helpline to be connected with resources. You can also access the web database here: <https://search.211md.org/>.

311 Hotline:

For nonemergency government information and services, **dial 3-1-1**, Monday - Friday 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Energy Bill Assistance:

There are several resources available if you need assistance paying your utility bill.

Office of the People's Counsel:

<https://opc.maryland.gov/Get-Help/Financial-Help-With-My-Gas-and-Electric-Bill>

The Maryland Public Service Commission:

<https://www.psc.state.md.us/get-help/consumer-faqs>

The Department of Human Services Office of Home Energy Programs:

<https://dhs.maryland.gov/office-of-home-energy-programs/>

The Office of the People's Counsel also has a consumer guide:

<https://opc.maryland.gov/Consumer-Learning/Utility-Rates-and-Basics>

Cold Weather:

The Maryland Department of Health Office of Preparedness and Response has information ranging from finding warming centers to preparing for power outages on their website:

https://health.maryland.gov/preparedness/pages/resources_cold.aspx