

The Maryland General Assembly adjourned the 2021 Legislative Session on Monday, April 12th. Even while facing various challenges posed by the COVID-19, this was once again a successful session for District 29, as I was able to secure State funding for important local projects in the Operating and Capital Budgets, including:

**Charlotte Hall Veterans Home** – Since 2019, I have worked with the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs and the Mechanicsville Volunteer Rescue Squad on how the State can support the Rescue Squad in responding to the volume of calls from the Charlotte Hall Veterans Home. This year, the Governor included \$200,000 in a supplemental budget to purchase an ambulance specifically for transport from the Veterans Home. This ambulance will ensure that the veterans who reside at CHVH continue to receive the best care possible and will reduce the number of calls that the Rescue Squad has to handle from the Veterans Home, giving them greater capacity to respond to other calls from the community they serve. The Senate also restored a proposed \$1 million reduction to the Veterans Home’s budget that had been removed by the House of Delegates.

**Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission** – The Governor included \$450,000 in a supplemental budget to support our local farmers through the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC). This restores funds that were cut from SMADC in this year’s budget and will ensure that they can continue their important work for our agricultural community, particularly their progress on the Southern Maryland Regional Agricultural Center. As a member of SMADC’s board, I worked to restore full funding for this vital resource for our Southern Maryland Counties.

**Other Local Projects** – Additionally, the Governor appropriated \$20 million for a new academic building and auditorium at St. Mary’s College of Maryland, \$1.5 million for facilities renewal at SMCM, \$1 million in additional funding for the excavation of St. Mary’s Fort, and \$1 million for oyster seeding efforts in our bay.

The Capital Budget also includes significant funding for District 29 including the Third Academic Building at the University of Maryland at Southern Maryland as well as, the Maryland Heritage Interpretive Center at Historic St. Mary’s City. Additionally, this budget appropriates \$2 million for needed repairs at Historic St. Mary’s City, \$500,000 for the Ridge Volunteer Fire Department to purchase a rescue boat, \$250,000 for the Innovative Center for Autonomous Systems at the St. Mary’s County Regional Airport, \$150,000 for the future St. Mary’s County Sports Complex, and \$100,000 for the Patuxent River Naval Air Museum and Visitor Center.

***Sponsored Legislation*** –I was proud to sponsor the below bills during this legislative session which will be presented to the Governor for his signature:

**Senate Bill 51 – Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland – Property Management – Southern Maryland Regional Agricultural Center** authorizes the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland to act as the property manager for the new Regional Agricultural Center (RAC) which is currently being built in Charlotte Hall. This bill institutes the technical change necessary to allow the Tri-County Council to act as property manager for the RAC, which will in turn allow the SMADC to operate the facility, reflecting how all parties involved want to move forward and putting the statute in line with the memorandum of understanding for this project.

**Senate Bill 318 – Natural Resources – Fishing and Hunting Rights** affirms the importance of hunting and fishing to Maryland’s cultural and social heritage and economy. The bill also codifies the intent of the General Assembly that Marylanders have a right to hunt and fish in accordance with regulations and restrictions under laws enacted by the General Assembly. While reasonable regulation of hunting and fishing is necessary to preserve our environment for future generations to enjoy, these statutes need to be balanced with the rights of our residents in this area. Formal recognition of these rights is intended to help in protecting this balance and

support the hundreds of thousands of Marylanders who fish and hunt and the hundreds of millions of dollars of economic activity that hunting and fishing generate in our State each year. Maryland was the 25<sup>th</sup> State to pass this type of legislation that was a priority for the Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus, which I chair.

**Senate Bill 861 – St. Mary's County – Public Facilities Bond** authorizes the St. Mary's County Commissioners to borrow money to finance the construction, improvement, or development of public facilities in St. Mary's County.

**Senate Bill 946 – Historic St. Mary's City Fort to 400 Commission** establishes the Historic St. Mary's City Fort to 400 Commission. This Commission will be directed to plan and conduct observances commemorating the 400th anniversary of Maryland's founding in 2034. As Maryland's first settlement, Historic St. Mary's City will be at the center of these celebrations. This is not only a high honor and responsibility, but also an economic opportunity for the area where the various stakeholders will be granted the responsibility to also ensure preservation efforts and maintain the historical significance of St. Mary's City. It is important to note that, this Commission will be focused not only on the statewide celebration and the observances held at St. Mary's City, but also on ensuring that we use this opportunity to the fullest to ensure the continued economic viability of Historic St. Mary's City and the surrounding area so that this rich history can be shared and enjoyed by many generations to come.

*Cross-filed Legislation* – I was the Senate sponsor of the below legislation to protect our students.

**House Bill 83 – Public and Nonpublic Schools – Electric Retractable Room Partitions – Operation Requirements** creates safety standards for the use of electric retractable room partitions in Maryland schools. The bill states that a school employee may not operate an electric retractable room partition in a school building unless one of three conditions are met. This bill was introduced in response to incidents in other states where improper operation of these partitions has killed or seriously injured students. I introduced the Senate version of this bill, Senate Bill 104, which included the language that ultimately was passed by the General Assembly.

*Other Legislation* – I was proud to work with my colleagues in the General Assembly on other important legislation that passed this year, including:

**Senate Bill 17 – Criminal Law – Life-Threatening Injury Involving a Motor Vehicle or Vessel – Criminal Negligence (Wade's Law)** which prohibits a person from causing a life-threatening injury to another as a result of the person's driving, operating, or controlling a motor vehicle or vessel in a criminally negligent manner. A violation of this law is punishable by a year in prison, a fine not exceeding \$5,000, or both. I diligently worked to ensure that this important public safety legislation was prioritized by the Judicial Proceedings Committee and passed this year.

**Senate Bill 324 – Environment and Natural Resources – Complaints, Inspections, and Enforcement – Information Maintenance and Reporting** ensures more transparency regarding how information about Maryland's natural resources and environmental laws are disseminated. I co-sponsored this bill and testified in support at the bill hearing.

**Senate Bill 769 – Income Tax Credit for Venison Donation – Reporting Requirement and Testing for Chronic Wasting Disease** was another priority of the Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus and requires the Department of Natural Resources to study deer brought to processors as part of the income tax credit program for venison donation for chronic wasting disease to ensure that the State is providing a safe and healthy food source to those in need through this initiative. As Senate Chair of the Sportsmen's Caucus, I co-sponsored this bill and testified in support at the bill hearing.

**Local Legislation** – In addition to these bills, I worked to secure passage of nine bills that are specific to St. Mary's or Calvert Counties that were requested by our local governments or communities:

**St. Mary's County**

House Bill 528 – St. Mary's County – Repeal of Impact Fee – Authorization of Building Excise Tax  
House Bill 529 – St. Mary's County – Alcoholic Beverages – Distillery On-Site Consumption Permit  
House Bill 530 – St. Mary's County – Gaming – Administration of Bingo Licenses  
House Bill 814 – St. Mary's County – Alcoholic Beverages Licenses – Annual Fees  
House Bill 862 – St. Mary's County and Metropolitan Commission – Debt Limitations

**Calvert County**

House Bill 801 – Calvert County – Public Safety – Buildings Used for Agritourism  
House Bill 1016 – Calvert County – Alcoholic Beverages Licenses – Annual Fees  
House Bill 1160 – Calvert County – Long-Term Contracts for Cellular Tower Leases  
House Bill 1173 – Calvert County – Public Facilities Bond

**Future Legislative Agenda** – Like other legislators, I had a number of bills that were not successful this session. Most notably, **Senate Bill 268 – Sexual Abuse of a Minor – Crime of Violence and Lifetime Supervision** which passed the Senate but was not passed by the House of Delegates before the end of the session. I will re-introduce this important legislation to protect Marylanders from the offenders who have committed these very serious crimes in the 2022 Legislative Session. After the amount of work that both the Senate and the House have put in to legislation on these topics, I am optimistic that this bill will pass next year.