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March 20, 2014

Things are certainly busy in Annapolis. Monday, March 17<sup>th</sup> was the “crossover” day, so now the House is hearing bills that have passed the Senate, and the Senate is hearing bills that passed the House. We have roughly three weeks left in the 2014 Legislative Session. Many bills have been heard by both houses; however, we still have a fair amount of bills left to vote on.

**HB 73/SB 247—Personal Injury or Death Caused by Dog—Rebuttable Presumption**

In last week’s newsletter, I discussed the upcoming House Floor vote on HB 73. This bill ended up passing unanimously in the House on March 11<sup>th</sup>. Amendments were added which state that the dog’s owner is not liable if personal injury was caused while the person was committing a criminal act, trespassing on the owner’s property, or provoking the dog.

The Senate version of this bill, SB 247, also passed unanimously in the Senate on February 28<sup>th</sup>. Given the significant amount of support in both houses, as well as the fact that both bills have the same amendments, we anticipate this legislation being signed into law.

**HB 881—Natalie M. LaPrade Medical Marijuana Commission**

Last year, the Natalie M. LaPrade Medical Marijuana Commission was established and permitted the use of medical marijuana if the treatment was through an academic research center. However, the earliest patients would have access to such programs would be 2016, and most academic research centers in the state said they would not participate.

HB 881 alters the guidelines for the Medical Marijuana Commission, thus making access easier for patients. It states that:

- A physician must have a written proposal approved by the Commission in order to be permitted to prescribe medical marijuana.
- Medical marijuana can only be used by patients who are suffering from cachexia, anorexia or wasting syndrome, chronic or severe pain, severe nausea, severe and persistent muscle spasms, or are in hospice or receiving palliative care.
- The committee is authorized to approve other uses at their discretion.

I have signed on as co-sponsor for this bill. This will allow patients who are suffering from debilitating injuries or illnesses to have access to medical marijuana, even if the academic research centers are not participating in this program.

This bill passed by a vote of 126-10 in the House on March 13<sup>th</sup>. Amendments were added that required the Commission to give patients and caregivers identification cards for the program, and also requires the establishment of a website which lists certified

physicians. The bill is now being heard in the Senate, and hearings will be held in the Judicial Proceedings Committee.

### **HB 297—Prekindergarten Expansion Act of 2014**

This bill establishes the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program, which would provide grants for four-year-olds to attend qualifying prekindergarten programs, provided that their family income is no more than 300% of the federal poverty guidelines.

This bill passed in the House on March 13<sup>th</sup> by a vote of 103-33. It is now in the Senate, and will be heard in the Budget and Taxation Committee on March 25<sup>th</sup>. Studies have shown that children who attend prekindergarten programs have a significantly higher rate of school readiness than those who do not, which is why I chose to support this bill.

### **HB 1026—Parental Leave—Birth or Adoption of a Child**

Under the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act many employees are granted the right to a certain amount of unpaid leave in the event of a birth or adoption of a child. However, this generally only applies to businesses with 50 or more employees. This bill extends the right to unpaid leave to individuals working for a company with at least 15 employees. This bill was a priority of the Women's Caucus.

This bill was passed in the House on March 13<sup>th</sup> by a vote of 98-36. It is now in the Senate, and the hearing is scheduled for March 26<sup>th</sup> in the Finance Committee.

### **General Information**

You can review any bill being considered by the General Assembly by visiting <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov>. Just enter the bill number – HB## or SB## in the “Find Legislation by Number” space and enter. This will bring up a summary sheet with the up-to-date status of the bill and a link to the bill itself.

You can also listen to the General Assembly sessions and Committee Hearing on the website. Just click on the “headphones” *“In the General Assembly”* box on the home page. To listen to Committee Hearing go to “Committees” from the home page and on the left you will see “House Committees ” you click and pick the hearing you want to listen to.

My office is open full time during the Session. Nancy Crawford is my Legislative Aide, Jenn Thompson is my Community Liaison and Lisa Johnson is my Intern for the session. My contact information remains the same: [pamela.beidle@house.state.md.us](mailto:pamela.beidle@house.state.md.us) or 410.841.3370. Please feel free to share your thoughts and concerns with me.

It is truly an honor to serve you in the Maryland General Assembly.