

2015 General Assembly Session

The 2015 session is now well underway. All of the Delegates and Senators have been sworn in, as well as the new Governor. This year, I have two exciting new responsibilities: I will be serving as the Delegation Chair for Anne Arundel County, and as the Chair of the Motor Vehicle and Transportation Subcommittee. This subcommittee is part of the Environment and Transportation Committee, formerly known as the Environmental Matters Committee. I also have a new office this session. I have moved from Room 161 to Room 165, which is just down the hall from my old office. I have had a very busy start to this Legislative Session.

Budget

The Constitution of the State of Maryland requires that the state budget is balanced each year. Last week, Governor Hogan released his budget for Fiscal Year 2016. It does appear that Governor Hogan's budget transition team did not find the waste and fraud they predicted was in State Budget. The Governor proposed to balance the budget and the structural deficit by changing certain formulas - particularly education formulas. So the major cuts are in programs whose funding is predetermined by formulas that are in place, changing these formulas not only change the proposed budget but future funding increases as well.

In Anne Arundel, the proposed cuts are \$9,583,522 to the Board of Education for this year and future years. As an example, this cut could mean 167 teacher positions which could result in larger class sizes. We are waiting to hear from Superintendent George Arlotta about the possible effects of this cut.

Anne Arundel Community College will see \$1,861,007 in cuts for 2016 in the proposed budget. This will surely mean an increase in tuition. And our four year universities will see a 20% increase in tuition over the next four years. (There has only been a 3% increase over the past 8 years.)

After four years the State Employees finally got a 2% raise on January 1, 2015, that will be "taken back" on July 1, 2015.

Health care provider rates will be frozen by Medicaid reimbursement.

Governor Hogan's budget also proposes that \$1,808,061 be taken from Video Impact Grants from Anne Arundel. This is the money from Maryland Live! that was to be allocated to Anne Arundel County to compensate for the impact of the Casino.

Over the next 8 weeks we will discuss these and other budget issues as they move through the budget process. We will continue our work to eliminate the structural deficit making difficult budget cuts and policy decisions.

County Legislation

At the moment, I am working closely with the County Executive's office on two pieces of legislation that I am sponsoring. The first bill would allow Anne Arundel County Police Officers to obtain secondary employment under certain circumstances. The second bill would protect first responders from liability when treating individuals experiencing a drug overdose. You will be able to follow these two bills online as soon as they are assigned bill numbers.

You can find information on all legislation this session at <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov>. You can check the status of current legislation, and search for bills by bill number, sponsor, or subject.

This session, I have Nancy Crawford returning as my Legislative Aide, and my former intern, Lisa Johnson, working as my Legislative Assistant. My office is open full time during the Session. My contact information remains the same: 6 Bladen Street, Room 165, Annapolis, MD 21401, 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.