



# END OF SESSION REPORT 2022

G.S. PROCTOR & ASSOCIATES, INC. / **2022 APRIL 12, TUESDAY**



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND CEO

On behalf of our firm, I would like to thank you for trusting our team to represent your interests before the Maryland General Assembly. Our success was the result of the associates, administrative support team, consultants, and partners whose combined skill and expertise brought about the quality in services that you have come to expect from G.S. Proctor & Associates. As you seek to identify more efficient methods to understand complex legislation and policies, we have also adopted new approaches and expanded successful practices to create impactful outcomes on behalf of your agenda and legislative priorities. Moreover, to better help your organization engage lawmakers and public officials, we committed ourselves to providing the most accurate, timely information, and guidance on the issues central to your priorities. Lastly, we collaborated extensively to offer solutions for pressing challenges and to create opportunities for our clients to mitigate adversity and better leverage opportunity. Our work here at G.S. Proctor & Associates is governed by a set of values and ethics that elevates thoughtful and courteous service above all else.

The 444th Maryland General Assembly - Legislative Session was the second, technically third, session utilizing video conference platforms and engagement protocols that centered on observing COVID-19 safety protocols. Social distancing and frequent testing were a normal feature of the first several, however, as COVID-19 protocols were relaxed across the state, legislative leadership grew confident a similar relaxation of protocols could be adopted. As lobbying and advocacy practices slowly return to normal, we know that a return to pandemic related protocols is always a possibility.

This year, we built on the key themes from the 2021 Legislative Session: keeping our personnel safe, working as closely as possible with key decision-makers, and communicating with you regularly on important developments. This approach served us extremely well in previous years and this year we created even more tools to take these themes to the next level.

Our efforts to protect our team, whether COVID-19 numbers were concerning or not, included a formal hybrid approach to limit the amount of associates in an office at any given time, while also providing our team all the necessary resources to be effective lobbyists and advocates.



Through the efforts mentioned above, our team helped secure millions in grant funding and Legislative Bond Initiatives for area non-profits and municipalities. We helped navigate our clients through sensitive tax and funding measures that impacted multiple jurisdictions. We represented energy interests and collaborated with community stakeholders on delivery and reliability issues. We provided expertise and analysis on transportation policy, expanding key protections for motorists with disabled vehicles on Maryland roadways; infrastructure and development issues; and we successfully expanded opportunities for healthcare professionals to deliver critical services to the public. Most importantly, we provided our clients, partners, and in many cases our friends access and insights to key political developments and the policies and legislative initiatives inspired by them.

We appreciate the opportunity you have given us to represent you. We know there are a number of other options you have to engage in the legislative process and we understand that providing you this service with integrity is what inspired your confidence and trust in our team. We look forward to working with you through the interim in preparation for the next Session.

Sincerely,

Steve Proctor





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Maryland's General Assembly has concluded its **444th** Legislative Session brought on by the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic and the presence of a budget surplus approaching \$6 billion, fueled in part by additional federal spending. From a policy perspective, 2022 shaped up to be the "five C's" session – with Climate, Cannabis, COVID-19, Candidates and Care, topping the legislative agenda. "Care" being the fifth– with how to boost child care providers and whether to provide paid leave insurance for people caring for sick loved ones also on the agenda. While not quite the 3,000+ bills from the recent sessions, there were 1,487 bills introduced in the House and 1,013 bills introduced in the Senate for a total of 2,500 bills introduced during this election year session.

Governor Hogan's State of the State highlighted his progress on key initiatives and successes over the past 8 years. Over the course of the Session, Governor Hogan expressed strong opinions about issues ranging from the invasion of Ukraine to his anticipated veto of state legislation advanced by the Democratically controlled legislature. Additionally, Governor Hogan announced plans to use \$6 billion in revenue surpluses to fund tax cuts for retirees, the manufacturing sector, and to help the State's most vulnerable citizens meet basic needs.



Governor Hogan spent considerable time and energy articulating his displeasure with the General Assembly's redistricting efforts. The decennial process suffered from a number of court challenges levied prior to and during the Session. Most legal challenges were based on the lack of compactness of the districts in the maps offered. Due to the timing of the challenges and potential impact of legal findings, the courts accelerated review and expedited rulings. This outcome forced the Assembly to reconsider and redraw district maps - in the process delaying election filing deadlines and the primary election date. The General Assembly ultimately revised and passed a redistricting map Governor Hogan was comfortable signing.

The Climate Bill called for comprehensive steps to reduce emissions in commercial and industrial buildings by the year 2030. The goal of this legislative initiative was to set the State's greenhouse gas emissions to 60% of 2006 levels. The impact on businesses and property owners is anticipated to be significant, prompting several key business stakeholders to challenge legislative leaders on the impact and potential costs. Governor Hogan did not veto this legislation and allowed it to become law without his signature.

The General Assembly approved a Cannabis referendum this Session. The bill would put the issue on the ballot for the 2022 general election where Maryland voters will either legalize cannabis or leave it in its current decriminalized state. In anticipation of approval from voters in November, the General Assembly has already set up the legislative and policy frameworks to regulate the licensing, sale, taxation, and adjudication of this issue.

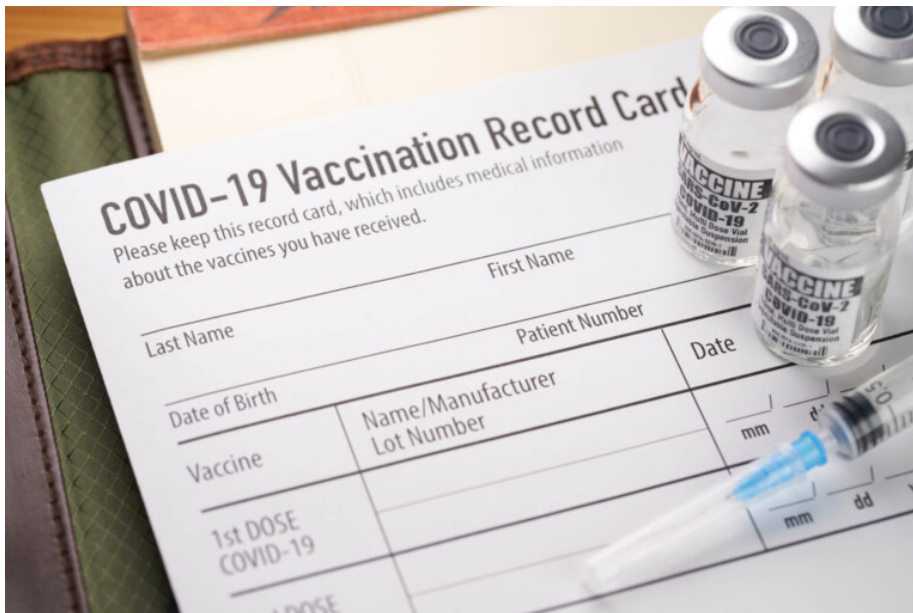
The Paid Family leave bill allows Maryland workers to receive up to 12 weeks of partially paid leave. This legislation was heavily lobbied by businesses and organizations of all sizes. Advocates intended for the bill to allow for employees with sick family members to have leave available to avoid risk of loss of income or employment .

In this final report, you'll find a summary of top legislative priorities for our clients this Session. The G.S. Proctor team invested significant time and energy in ensuring that our clients enjoyed similar levels of access during this "virtual session" as they have in more traditional legislative environments. Despite our transition from in-person to virtual meetings, we strengthened our legislative strategies for each of our clients concerning a wide-range of issues that impacted our client communities. We believe our efforts to secure legislative outcomes and funding through a variety of state agencies and programs yielded significant benefits for our clients and the communities they serve.

# LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

## COVID

For the past two years, the novel Coronavirus upended the U.S. economy and the nation as a whole. In contrast, from an entirely virtual 2021 session; the 444th General Assembly entered into the third year of the pandemic by allowing the public to access the building, despite the rising COVID-19 infections and mutations.



Many advocates were excited for the General Assembly to reopen its doors to the public this session, few were hesitant for the return to 'normalcy'. For both chambers, the coalition made several recommendations for the [House](#) and [Senate](#), as well as pandemic safety protocols, including:

- Making fiscal and policy notes for all bills available on the General Assembly website prior to the two-day testimony sign-up window;
- Providing assistance for non-English speakers attempting to sign up to testify and having interpreters on-hand;
- Requiring all lawmakers to be visible on camera and clearly audible at all times;
- Giving the public access to written testimony in real-time rather than at the end of hearings; and
- Requiring registered lobbyists to adhere to the same COVID-19 restrictions placed on the general public.



While the coronavirus shifted political and business priorities globally and in Maryland for the past two years, this Legislative Session introduced legislation that prioritized infrastructure, economy and the health of Marylanders. On Monday, March 28, 2022, Governor Hogan, Senate President Ferguson and House Speaker Jones, announced a [\\$1.86 billion tax-relief agreement](#). The agreement aims to provide real, long-term relief for hard-working Marylanders dealing with inflation and higher prices, and to provide more opportunities to foster a strong recovery throughout the state.

This bipartisan agreement includes relief for retirees 65 and older making up to \$100,000 in retirement income, and married couples making up to \$150,000 in retirement income. Additionally, 80% of retirees will get a considerable tax break or pay no state income taxes at all. The plan consists of incentives - The Work Opportunity Tax Credit - to incentivize businesses and employers to retain and hire workers that have faced significant barriers to employment.

## EDUCATION

This Legislative Session had a variety of bills focusing on primary and secondary education: from virtual schooling to school construction updates, from discipline on school properties to electrification of school bus fleets and boards of education realignments. Maryland's education

system, rightfully so, has been a major topic of discussion for the past three sessions; starting with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (HB1 - 2020), which was the Legislature's attempt at fixing myriad systemic and generational issues that lawmakers claimed have been unaddressed for way too long; to include more robust early childhood education, improving teacher and faculty compensation and investing additional resources to serve at-risk students.



A multi-year effort to overhaul Maryland's education system and school construction processes and timelines was further supplemented with bills that affected the State's share of funding for needed changes to school buildings, via HB1290. The bill clarifies state participation by among other measures, providing an additional 10% in state-directed funding to local school systems

for needed renovations for some localities with communities with lower economic thresholds. HB1450 delayed some key dates for deliverables related to the Blueprint while providing an additional \$800 million in funding for school systems to implement needed improvements.

Other education-related bills include:

### SCHOOL BOARD REALIGNMENT

[HB355](#) Prince George's County Board of Education - Workgroup, Alterations, and Orientation Requirement PG 503-22 (Prince George's County Delegation) - **Enacted**

Establishes a workgroup on the membership and to recommend best practices in compensation, operations, and other areas. The board will start to transition to an all-elected board in 2024, at which point board members will vote for a board chair and vice chair. And, it initiates the work group that would evaluate and make recommendations before an all-elected board comes into effect.

### PUBLIC SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

[HB1290](#) Education - Public School Construction - Funding and Administration (McIntosh) - **Enacted**

HB1290 represents the hard work of the Maryland General Assembly's Workgroup on the Assessment and Funding of School Facilities to ensure equitable future school construction under The Blueprint for Maryland's Future and Built to Learn Act. This bill establishes a series of policies to guide future school construction and capital projects as Maryland moves into implementation of the landmark education legislation, The Blueprint for Maryland's Future and Built to Learn Act.

This legislation will build upon the work of the Built to Learn Act by investing in the creation of net-zero schools and giving the Interagency Commission on School Construction the responsibility to annually inspect and report schools for health and safety issues, including lead paint, asbestos hazards, and air quality (including carbon dioxide pollutants).

The bill also addresses some major concerns of local governments about the funding and state/local share of said projects. This legislation gives school districts credit and some incentives moving forward to include the State picking up more of the share of the cost of building schools. Schools with a high concentration of poverty (80% or more students that qualify) would get a 10% increase in State share; a 5% increase in the State share for schools that have demonstrated



excellent maintenance of their buildings; a 5% increase to schools that build as net-zero buildings; and a 5% increase in State share for projects with an estimated total cost of ownership that is at least 15% of baseline levels.

## VIRTUAL SCHOOLING

([SB362](#)) - Primary and Secondary Education - Virtual Schools - Revisions (Pinsky and four other senators) - **Passed**

The effects of the pandemic resulted in nationwide school closures and facilitated the demand for a transition to virtual learning. This session lawmakers considered a bill that would establish the guidelines for virtual schools offered by local school districts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and alter the requirements for local boards of education or the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). This legislation authorizes counties to establish one virtual school per grade band, which must deliver instruction remotely and entirely or primarily online. The bill also requires the State Superintendent of Schools to report the appropriate balance of synchronous and asynchronous learning by December 31, 2022, and requires MSDE to establish regulations and standards for a virtual school.

## CLIMATE - BUS ELECTRIFICATION, SCHOOL RENOVATIONS

([SB528](#)) Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 (Pinsky) - **Enacted**

This bill builds a framework to help achieve a transition to clean energy; this wide-ranging climate bill ultimately sets the state of Maryland on a path to achieve carbon neutral emissions by 2045. The Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 would do so by requiring buildings 2500sq/ft or larger to start relying on electricity, versus carbon emitting energy sources for space and water heating needs, creating a “green bank” that would invest state funds into private projects that reduce gas emissions and requiring the PSC to study and make recommendations on standards. As introduced, it also mandates the State to begin efforts to electrify its school-bus fleet. The bill no longer requires the construction of net-zero school buildings, and the bill gives some financial aid to local school districts as an incentive.

# LEGALIZATION

Maryland lawmakers approved [House Bill 1](#), which establishes the ballot referendum to legalize recreational marijuana for adult use, effective July 1, 2023. While the ballot amendment to legalize marijuana does not require the Governor's approval, he had the option to weigh in on the companion bill, [House Bill 837](#), that would create an implementation plan based on the findings of the [House Cannabis Referendum Workgroup](#), if the amendment passes in November's election. Reputable polling data indicates widespread approval for the ballot measure, and may lead to a higher turnout of single-issue voters.

HB1, the constitutional amendment bill, defines that recreational marijuana would not be legal until July 2023 for people 21 and over. The legislation includes provisions spelling out a transitional period between January 1 and July 1 that would include a fine for possession of marijuana of under an ounce and a half.



HB837 sets out to address criminal justice and public health issues, while also building a foundation for social equity in the industry, legalize possession of up to 1.5 ounces of marijuana, remove criminal penalties on possessing up to 2.5 ounces and create a system to expunge past criminal records for those convicted of possessing marijuana. The legislation leaves the details on how to create and regulate a legal marijuana market in Maryland up to future lawmakers in 2023. The bill also calls for a study to collect data on patterns of use, incidents of impaired driving and the impact cannabis use has on public health.

The [Governor neither signed nor vetoed](#) HB837, however, the bill will become law with the approval of the Maryland General Assembly.

Currently, 18 states, along with the District of Columbia, have fully legalized marijuana. There also are 37 states, including Maryland, that have legalized medical marijuana. Maryland currently has about 150,000 registered cannabis patients.



# HEALTHCARE

Healthcare remains a prominent issue this Legislative Session and Maryland policymakers made several decisions not only on major healthcare issues, but healthcare concerns that COVID-19 brought to light, such as home care provider shortages, long-term care effects on employer/employees and the increased role that pharmacists and pharmacies played in the current healthcare climate.



The pandemic caused significant fluctuations in long-term and home care services, plaguing staff shortages in the direct care workforce among nursing homes and home care staff. In this year's session, legislators considered two bills that would help solve this crisis. The first, [Senate Bill 600/House Bill 544](#), legislation that, if enacted, would empower policymakers with the information they need to ensure that home care jobs are decent jobs that workers want to do without

putting any administrative burden on home care agencies. The second bill, [Senate Bill 863/House Bill 981](#), would have given a raise to both home care agencies and home care workers. Unfortunately, neither bill appealed to the Maryland General Assembly to help solve the homecare workforce shortages.

Meeting the needs of caretakers due to COVID-19 related illnesses, a statewide paid family and medical leave program received final legislative approval this year. [Senate Bill 275](#), the [Time to Care Act](#), will offer Marylanders 12 weeks of partially paid family leave each year to care for themselves or a loved one after a serious health issue and up to 24 weeks of paid leave for new parents. This insurance program would be funded by employers and workers, with the exact contribution from each to be determined from a cost analysis completed by the Department of Labor once every two years.

Governor Hogan vetoed The Time to Care Act stating, "if the General Assembly had passed a family leave program that defined small business as those with fewer than 50 employees (bill indicates 15 employees), he would have been "more inclined to support it." He also expressed that the bill was supported by "no actuarial analysis, no viable plan for implementation, and

leaves the smallest of small businesses vulnerable to insurmountable regulatory burdens.” The Maryland General Assembly overrode the Governor’s veto allowing the bill to be law.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, pharmacists have been integral to the delivery of public health services including, but not limited to, administering immunizations, administering COVID-19 therapies, telehealth management of chronic diseases and COVID-19 testing. Because they are known to be the most trusted and accessible of the healthcare professions, [HB1219/SB661](#) was introduced this session to recognize pharmacists as health care providers, allowing them to receive reimbursement for the extended services they provide.

There are thousands of pharmacists in Maryland who are ready to provide valuable healthcare services to areas with limited access to care. By realigning financial incentives and reimbursing pharmacists for their services similar to other health care professionals, there will be greater access to the vital health care services pharmacists provide. Recognizing pharmacists as independent providers will allow Marylanders increased access to routine tests and, ultimately, decrease unmet health needs.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Maryland Municipal League (MML) adopted priorities for the 2022 Legislative Session included the following:

- Continue to advocate for the return and protection of municipal highway revenues;
- Ensure municipalities have the option of creating their own Police Accountability Boards and Committees, following last year’s new law enforcement policy changes; and
- Climate change mitigation.

It’s been 12 long years since local government funding was drastically cut back while the state’s budget was in crisis. While most service cuts were restored as times got better, the diversion of local funds never was. Maintenance schedules have been abandoned, safety projects stalled, and even road-clearing efforts have been strained. It is their desire for the state to go back to the fair 70/30 formula split that worked well for decades. There are two bills introduced aimed to correct this issue ([HB1187/SB726](#)) aiming to correct this problem. The passage of HB1187/SB726 will increase the share of funds from the Gasoline and Motor Vehicle Revenue Account that the Maryland Department of Transportation must annually provide to local governments

through capital transportation grants from fiscal 2024 through 2027. The bill takes effect July 1, 2022 and will restore highway user revenues back to local governments and make this a fair part of Maryland's future infrastructure planning.

The Police Accountability Boards, mandated by state law passed in the 2021 Legislative Session, will review complaints of misconduct by police officers in Maryland's county and municipal law enforcement agencies. The passage of the 2021 mandate was to set aside ideology and partisanship, and focus on interest rather than positions, to seek a greater accountability while ensuring fairness to those who serve and protect. However, [HB1184](#) was introduced by MML to revise the state law relating to Police Accountability Boards and Administrative Charging Committees and gave municipalities the option to create their own Boards and Committees. HB1184 failed to get the approval of the Maryland General Assembly.



[SB528/CH0038](#), the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022, will take effect without the Governor's signature and the passage reflects the growing public concern about the impacts of climate change. The legislation sets aggressive goals for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in Maryland and establishes new policies to help achieve that goal, including requiring more building electrification, creating a "green bank" that would invest state funds into private projects that reduce gas emissions and expanding the state electric vehicle fleet. The unprecedented Act calls for Maryland to reduce greenhouse gasses by 60% by 2031 and for the Maryland economy to reach net-zero emissions by 2045, declaring it the most ambitious climate change law adopted by any state in the country.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

Following last year's priorities surrounding criminal justice reform, stemming from a number of very public police-involved tragedies, this 444th Legislative Session also saw a variety of ways to further improve transparency and accountability for law enforcement agencies and explore alternatives to incarceration primarily with regard to juvenile justice and restorative justice efforts. While there is a demand for more accountability and transparency, there is also a recognition by many in the State that crime levels that most areas in the country are facing, require urgent and meaningful engagement from law enforcement to see improvements.



### [SB691](#) Juvenile Justice Reform (Carter) - **Enacted**

Reforms the Maryland juvenile justice system by establishing new sentencing rules. Among the changes included in Senator Carter's bill: no confinement for first-time misdemeanor offenses, unless the crime involves a gun. The bill establishes the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging and Best 12 Practices, which is charged with researching culturally competent, evidenced-based, and promising practices.



### [SB53](#) Juvenile Law - Child Interrogation Protection Act (Carter) - **Gubernatorial Veto Override (Legislative date: 4/8/2022)**

This bill establishes new sentencing rules for youth, including a ban on incarceration for minor offenses. It would also set a minimum age for criminal charges, expand access to diversion initiatives and create time limits for probation terms. The bill also requires law enforcement officers who take children into custody or charges a child with a violation to provide notice to the child's parents or guardian.

### [HB425/SB387](#) - Public Safety - Untraceable Firearms "Ghost Guns" (Speaker) - **Enacted**

Under the measure, guns made after Oct. 22, 1968, will have to have a serial number on them. This bill aims to prohibit the sale and transfer of gun kits that are up to 80% complete, that purchasers, then, finish assembling themselves. As the weapons, and the potential harm associated, became more common, the MGA continued its multi-year effort to ban the practice by putting together a bill that would prevent gun owners from avoiding Maryland requirements for gun ownership, including background checks, training courses and other existing requirements.

## STATE BUDGET

Governor Hogan's 2023 budget proposal included a \$58.2 billion spending plan that increased state education funding, expanded relief programs for Marylanders hit hardest by the pandemic, and included numerous tax reliefs to Maryland retirees. His budget was more than \$8 billion higher than the initial expenditures he proposed in last year's budget, due to federal stimulus funds and improvement to Maryland's economy.

The approved budget provided historic levels of funding to help counties, businesses, and Marylanders most in need to recover from the pandemic. In addition, it included funding to the Blueprint, public safety programs, expanded Medicaid coverage, housing development and increased aid to higher education.

However, changes made by the House and Senate decisions restored several cuts originally proposed by Hogan, including \$29.8 million to support independent colleges and universities and \$26.6 million for community colleges. Total community college funding for the year is up more than 9% to \$371.5 million.

Within this session's funding, G.S. Proctor was successful with advocating for its non-profit, business and education clients totaling over \$1.5 million in the state's approved Capital Budget Bond Initiatives.

This will be the final year Maryland's governor will have influence on the state's spending. Under current law, legislators are limited to reducing the governor's expenditures for programs; after voters passed a constitutional amendment in 2020, the next General Assembly will have more power to move money between programs in state government.

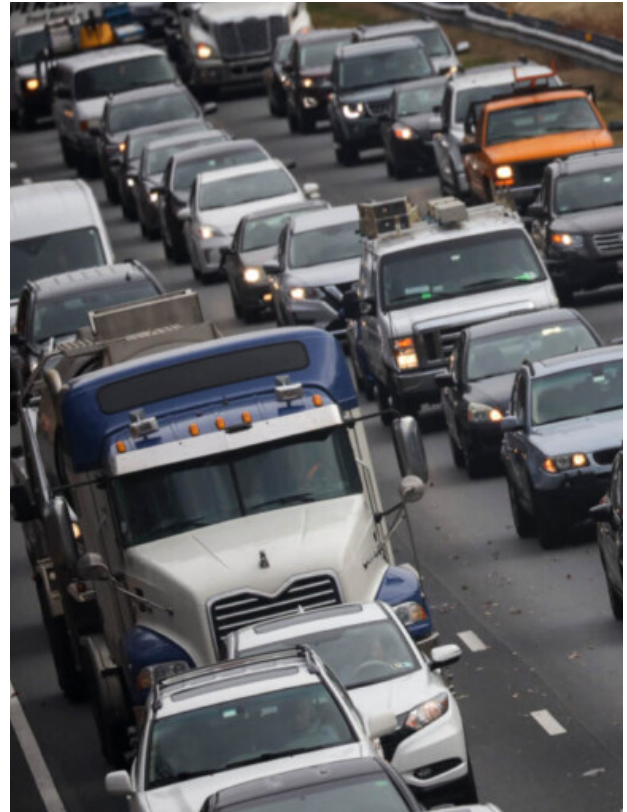
Passing a balanced budget is the legislature's one constitutional responsibility. The 2022 approved state [capital](#) and [operational](#) budget are highlighted.



# TRANSPORTATION

To address the dangers drivers face when in distress on the side of the road, the Maryland General Assembly approved [SB0147/HB0105](#), which expands the “move over” requirement under the Maryland Vehicle Law to apply to any vehicle on a highway that is displaying hazard warning lights, road flares, or other caution signals, including traffic cones, caution signs, or non vehicular warning lights. The bill requires a driver approaching a vehicle that is stopped, standing, or parked on a highway and displaying an applicable signal to make a lane change or, if the driver is unable to lawfully make a lane change, slow to a reasonable and prudent speed. A violation is a misdemeanor subject to a maximum fine of \$500.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, payment of toll fees became a widely-covered issue resulting in several pieces of legislation, including [HB0335](#). This bill, which passed unanimously, requires the terms and conditions for E-ZPass accounts to allow a person to dispute any charge or fee for the use of a Maryland toll facility within at least one year after the charge or fee is posted to the person’s E-ZPass account. The bill takes effect June 1, 2022, and terminates June 30, 2023.



[HB0038](#) reestablishes Chapter 547 of 2018, which terminated May 31, 2021, authorizing the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) to recall a delinquent account from the Central Collection Unit (CCU) if specified conditions are met and prohibiting the CCU from collecting any debt that is recalled by MDTA. The account may be recalled if the account exceeds \$300 in unpaid video tolls and civil penalties; the video tolls in question were assessed within a 30-day period; and mitigating factors exist with respect to the tolls and penalties, as determined by MDTA. MDTA may only currently recall an account from CCU if there is an error with the toll violation that is MDTA's fault. The bill takes effect June 1, 2022.

Maryland lawmakers addressed updated child car seat safety recommendations through the passage of [SB0176](#), which requires a person transporting a child younger than age two in a motor vehicle to secure the child in a rear-facing child safety seat that complies with applicable federal regulations until the child reaches the weight or height limit specified by the



manufacturer of the child safety seat. A first violation is a misdemeanor and carries a written warning. A second or subsequent violation includes a \$50 fine. Violations are not considered moving violations and points are not assessed. Current Maryland law does not address rear-facing child seats.

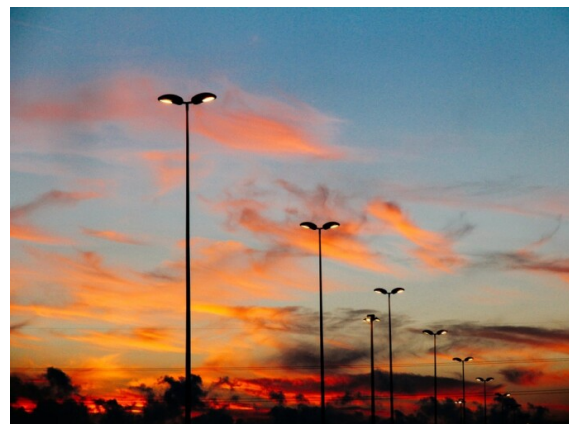
Maryland lawmakers unanimously approved [HB1187/SB0726](#), which increases the share of funds from the Gasoline and Motor Vehicle Revenue Account (GMVRA) that the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) must annually provide to local governments through capital transportation grants from fiscal years 2024 through 2027. During the five fiscal years from 2024 through 2027, the bill directs an additional \$8.4 million in FY 2024, \$101.4 million in FY 2025, \$113.3 million in FY 2026, and \$125.6 million in FY 2027 to local governments. The bill takes effect July 1, 2022.

The Maryland General Assembly gave final approval to [SB0612](#), which increases penalties and assesses points for violations related to participation in racing or speed contests. The bill also creates a statewide prohibition on exhibition driving on any highway or private property that is used for driving by the general public. The legislation authorizes a police officer to order the towing and impounding of a vehicle that is driven either in a race or speed contest or an exhibition driving event. The bill is effective June 1, 2022.

March gas prices increased dramatically beyond \$4 due to the rising inflation rate and the start of aggression by Russia against Ukraine. This led the Maryland General Assembly to enact temporary gas tax relief in the form of [SB1010/CH0002](#). For the 30-day period beginning on the effective date of the [Act](#), motor fuel taxes that would otherwise be imposed were suspended. The gas tax suspension expires on April 16, 2022. Attempts to extend the date beyond April 16 failed.

## UTILITIES

The 2022 Legislative Session saw another run at major environmental legislation. As utility companies seek to address their greenhouse gas (GHG) footprint, while continuing to provide customers with safe, reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy through innovative and inclusive solutions, a package of bills to address climate change were discussed in Annapolis. In debate and negotiations with plans to revisit Climate Solutions



Now Act (Senate Bill 414/ House Bill 583); which ultimately did not pass in the 2021 Legislative Session. This year [Senate Bill 528](#), introduced by Senator Pinsky, aims to set Maryland on course for net-zero carbon emissions by 2045, while incorporating key elements aimed to address environmental injustice and workforce development in relation to climate change. [Senate Bill 528](#) was enacted two days prior to Sine Die, and will take effect without the Governor's signature; Enacted under Article II, Section 17(b) of the Maryland Constitution - Chapter 32.

Other bills of impact to utilities included:

- [\[Senate Bill 526\] - Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard and Renewable Energy Credits - Offshore Wind](#) (Feldman) - **Passed**
  - This legislation will require that electric companies act as the agent for electricity suppliers only for the transfer of OREC payments from ratepayers to offshore wind developers. Senate Bill 526 alters the process for purchasing Offshore Wind Renewable Energy Credits (OREC) to satisfy the offshore wind energy component of the renewable energy portfolio standard and requires the Public Service Commission (PSC) to adopt regulations establishing a certain cost recovery mechanism. The system for the transfer of OREC payments proposed by the bill is substantially similar to what Maryland's regional neighbor, New Jersey, employs.
- [\[House Bill 801/Senate Bill 423\] Natural Gas–Strategic Infrastructure Development & Enhancement–Surcharge and Plans \(STRIDE Act of 2022\)](#) (Branch and Hayes) - **Withdrawn**
  - Seeking to build on the successful existing Stride program, the STRIDE Act of 2022 would have enabled the same contemporaneously collected surcharge that is used for infrastructure replacement to be utilized and newer, and more efficient, multi-year rate plans. Both bills were withdrawn from consideration due to the sponsors feeling the timing was not favorable due to the distractions caused by SB 528, the Climate Solutions legislation.

