

ROBERT G. CASSILLY
Legislative District 34
Harford County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review

Joint Committee on Federal Relations



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 401
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3158 · 301-858-3158
800-492-7122 Ext. 3158
Bob.Cassilly@senate.state.md.us

District Office
1015 South Main Street
Bel Air, Maryland 21014
443-502-0583

2021 Legislative Session in Review
An End of Session Letter from Senator Bob Cassilly

Dear Harford County Neighbor,

The 2021 ninety-day legislative session of the Maryland General Assembly concluded April 12th. Once again, it was my privilege and honor to serve the citizens of Harford County as your Senator for Legislative District 34, as Chairman of the Harford County Senate Delegation, and ranking Republican member of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee.

I very much appreciate the considerable citizen input that I received from so many of you throughout the session. While the session was filled with many challenges, I am pleased to report that the citizens of Harford County and Maryland were well served by your Harford County Delegation.

Throughout the session I worked closely with all of my Senate colleagues to advocate a balanced agenda that promotes good jobs, controls spending, reduces your tax burden, demands accountability from public officials, unleashes the awesome productive power of the private sector, protects our environment, supports first class education, improves transportation, provides for the less fortunate, and protects your fundamental rights. I worked especially hard in this difficult year to protect your public safety from highly vocal special interest groups determined to achieve a radical, anti-police agenda.

I appreciate the cooperative efforts by our County, municipal, and community leaders throughout Harford County who advocated and worked with me and my staff to improve our communities.

In the attached, 2021 Legislative Session Summary, I provide some details and highlights of the 2021 Session. Please feel free to contact me by mail, email, or phone at the contacts above with any questions or to share your thoughts and opinions.

Thank you to the many who corresponded with me throughout the legislative session, and I hope you will continue to share your thoughts.

With my best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Bob Cassilly'.

Senator Bob Cassilly

Budget

For the seventh consecutive year, Governor Hogan introduced, and the General Assembly passed, a balanced budget that does not require borrowing or tax increases (**House Bill 588**). The overall budget reflects the Governor's legislative priorities of an efficient and effective government that both provides for essential governmental services and also unleashes the awesome potential of the private sector to support a strong economy and diverse employment opportunities.

State Capital Budget Projects for Harford County

I am very pleased to report that, as shown in the list below, the capital budget this year includes over \$20 million of special projects in Harford County, for which I advocated, that will improve our schools, parks, and recreational facilities.

- **Harford Community College Chesapeake Welcome Center** - \$2,817,000.00
- **Bel Air Middle School** - \$1,355,000.00
- **Center for Educational Opportunity** - \$2,231,000.00
- **Joppatowne High School** - \$5,982,000.00
- **Izaak Walton League Conservation and Education Center** - \$350,000.00
- **Harford Community College Work Force Training** - \$260,000.00
- **Susquehanna State Park – Campground Access** - \$210,000.00
- **Aberdeen – Rock Glenn Park** - \$157,000.00
- **Havre de Grace American Legion Post No.47** - \$100,000.00 for dock improvements.
- **Havre de Grace Marina Dredging & Engineering** - \$150,000.00
- **Water Street Boat Ramp Parking Lot** - \$134,000.00
- **Sports fields at the Edgewood Athletic Facility** - \$250,000.00
- **Edgewood Armory Chiller Replacement** - \$155,000.00
- **Sexual Assault/Spousal Abuse Resource Center** - \$150,000.00
- **Havre de Grace CSMS Maintenance Facility** - \$5,028,000.00

Public Safety

My highest priority as an elected official is the safety of all Marylanders. I fully support Maryland's police and prosecutors who are dedicated to keeping our county and state safe. As the ranking Republican member of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee (JPR), I help shape all bills that impact public safety. Committee members considered many hours of testimony throughout the 90 day legislative session from: crime victims, police, prosecutors, judges, former convicts, and active citizens. Some of the more significant public safety bills this session include:

- **SB245**, which I strongly opposed, would have eliminated School Resource Officers (SRO) in all schools.
- I co-sponsored **SB852**, the Governor's anti-crime bill, which would have made it a felony instead of a misdemeanor to use a firearm during the commission of a felony or crime of violence. It also makes it a felony to sell a firearm if when the seller knows that the buyer intends to use it to commit a crime or cause harm to another person. This bill passed the Senate but died in the House.
- I strongly opposed **SB202** which passed and will allow those sentenced to life imprisonment to be released after serving as little as 11.5 years. It also removes the Governor from his current role which requires that parole cannot be granted someone serving life sentences unless the Governor approves the parole.
- I opposed **SB494** which removed the sentence of life without the possibility of parole for those under 18 when they commit first degree murder, allowing them to be paroled in as little as 11.5 years.

Policing

This session there was a great deal of effort related to “police reform” due to the events happening around the country over the last few years. Unfortunately, these bills have gone too far and will ultimately lead to less police officers and more crime in Maryland.

- I opposed **SB71** which radically changes the standard for evaluating the reasonableness of police use of force. The new statute substantially raises the risk to officers that their ‘use of force’ to defend themselves and others will be subjected to Monday morning quarterback review by people who have no experience with dangers and incredible challenges police face in meeting life or death situations. It forces officers to endure considerable danger by requiring them to reduce the level of force to that proportional to the force used by an assailant, allowing the assailant an equal fighting chance, and requires officers to cease using force before the threat has been eliminated.
- I opposed **HB670** which repeals the Law Enforcement Officer’s Bill of Rights (LEOBR). LEOBR was crafted over decades to provide for a statewide uniform procedures for police administrative discipline. I supported amendments to LEOBR but the General Assembly voted to delete the entire law and then replaced it with a very poor, quickly drafted bill that does great disservice to law enforcement officers. Treating policing in such a haphazard fashion is an insult to the profession and will most certainly cause long term damage to the recruitment and retention of qualified law enforcement officers.
- I opposed **SB600** which creates an Independent Investigative Unit within the Office of the Attorney General to conduct the investigations of incidents involving a death of a person caused by a police officer; the attorney general’s office is by its nature highly political office and this change will only inject doubt into the legitimacy of the investigative process. I supported an amendment that would have placed this power with the politically neutral State Prosecutor’s office. The bill also needlessly creates confusion and removes the authority of the county police to immediately initiate investigations; these defects could very well cause confusion and missteps between local and state investigators which would lead to loss of evidence and witnesses.
- I opposed **SB178** which allows the inspection of certain personnel records of police officers by the public and requires no-knock warrants to be approved by the State’s Attorney and to be executed during daylight hours. The bill requires a judge to weigh the increased risk to officers’ lives against the risk to pets that might be injured during execution of no-knock warrants. It also requires officers to wait 20 seconds before forcing entry on a knock and announce warrant, allowing criminals ample time to destroy evidence or escape.

Education

In this increasingly complex and competitive global economy, it is vital that we provide our children with the knowledge and skills necessary to compete and succeed in life. This session the General Assembly addressed a number of important education related issues:

- **SB66** establishes the Office of Digital Inclusion and required the office to create a statewide plan to ensure that all Maryland state residents have the ability to connect to reliable broadband Internet by December 31, 2026.
- **SB824** requires Counties or Municipalities to adopt policies to advance the progress of infrastructure, equipment, and systems to extend broadband access to underserved areas.
- I opposed **HB1372** which expands state control of our county schools. Harford County has excellent schools and state micromanagement of our teachers will only stifle their initiative, dedication, and creativity.

Taxes

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a strong focus on helping Marylanders struggling to meet their needs. One of the biggest ways we were able to help was through immediate tax relief and tax credits.

- I supported **SB496** which provides Marylanders with a state stimulus payment, income tax relief, and other forms of more immediate relief to businesses and employers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- I supported **SB218** which creates a refundable credit against the State income tax equal to \$500 for each dependent child and it also expands the eligibility of the State and local earned income tax credits.
- Unfortunately, **SB370** which would have increased the subtraction modification for military retirees to \$20,000 and to \$10,000 for retired public safety workers was killed in committee.

Health

The COVID-19 pandemic generated a number of health related bills this session and I am pleased to have supported legislation that helped individuals receive the physical and mental health support that they need and deserve.

- I supported **SB719** which provides a service whereby an individual with mental health needs can register with the Health Department to request a periodic, opt-in, mental health services phone call. Once registered, the Health Department calls the individual periodically to inquire about the individual's mental health status and arranges for intervention as necessary.
- I supported **SB164** which requires the Departments of Health and Veterans' Affairs to include mental health first aid in their services to veterans. The aid would consist of training for veterans and family members on how to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders.
- I supported **SB3** which expands the coverage and reimbursement requirements for health care services provided through telehealth for both Medicaid and private insurance.
- I opposed **SB41** which lowers from 16 to 12 years old the age at which a minor, without the parent's knowledge, can consent to treatment or consultation for a suspected mental or emotional disorder.

Election Law

With this past election, there was much controversy over the legitimacy of the voting results. I reject those who say that the low number of prosecutions for voter fraud means that we can be very lax in protecting the sanctity of the ballot box. We have relatively few prosecutions for littering but there is no doubt that littering occurs with great frequency. Prosecutions for voter fraud, like for littering, are very difficult to support unless the offender is so foolish to commit the offense in front of the authorities.

- I opposed **SB683** which expands the use of permanent absentee ballots. The bill, as written, allows for ballot harvesting whereby political operatives obtain from the State lists of those who registered for absentee ballots so the political operatives can visit voters' homes to "assist" voters with the final disposition of the ballots. This process invites fraud and has been outlined in many other states.