



GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

Regional business leaders creating a better tomorrow...today.



The 2020 legislative session of the Maryland General Assembly started in a historic fashion with two new presiding officers, Senate President Bill Ferguson and House Speaker Adrienne Jones. It ended historically with an abbreviated session due to COVID-19, adjourning Sine Die on March 18 rather than April 6, which was the scheduled end of the 90 day session. The shortened session prompted legislators to accelerate the passage of the Fiscal Year 2021 budget and prioritize legislation for passage. Legislative leaders announced their intention to return for a special session in late May to override potential vetoed legislation and address other issues as they arise. While abbreviated, the 2020 session had no shortage of significant policy changes that affect the Greater Baltimore region's business climate and competitiveness.

Blueprint for Maryland's Future



House Bill 1300 -- *Blueprint for Maryland's Future – Implementation* passed the legislature and was sent to the Governor late Tuesday, March 17. The bill establishes in law the policies and accountability recommendations of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (the Kirwan Commission), including creation of a new Accountability and

Implementation Board to oversee implementation of the policies and funding provided under the Blueprint. Existing funding formulas are altered, and new funding formulas are established for specific purposes, such as a concentration of poverty grant and publicly funded full-day prekindergarten. The final version of the bill decreased the financial burden on the poorest jurisdictions, including Baltimore City. The bill also includes a provision that would limit state and local education aid requirements if the state's revenue estimates decrease by more than 7.5% in a given year. The bill also now provides a "checkpoint" to test the success of the reforms by 2026.

Public Safety

The topic of public safety and curbing violent crime garnered more attention from policymakers than in previous sessions. The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) supported numerous public safety proposals, but during the shortened session only some were able to achieve passage. SB 907 -- *Public Safety - Crime Plan and Law Enforcement Councils*



(Maryland State Crime Plan) passed, which establishes the Law Enforcement Coordinating Council within the Department of State Police to prevent and reduce crime by coordinating and focusing State resources and ensuring interagency communications and intelligence sharing. The General Assembly also passed SB 929 -- *Public Safety - Baltimore City - P.R.O.T.E.C.T. (Public Resources Organizing to End Crime Together) Program*, which maximizes the use of State, local, and community resources to combat neighborhood decline through the creation of 10 high-crime micro-zones. The legislature also strengthened witness intimidation laws, increased penalties for the willful failure to report the loss or theft of a regulated firearm, and required the Office of the Attorney General to study information regarding firearm crimes.

Pimlico / Preakness



The GBC supported Senate Bill 987 -- *Racing and Community Development Act of 2020*, which passed on Sine Die. This legislation represents a comprehensive agreement that preserves the historic tradition of the running of the Preakness Stakes at Pimlico, enhances the horse racing industry across the State, and spurs economic development in the adjacent communities of the Pimlico Race

Course. The GBC commends the commitment and dedication of the negotiating parties to reach the agreement reflected in the legislation and the General Assembly in passing this important bill.

Transportation Initiatives

The GBC supported the House Bill 368/Senate Bill 424 -- *Transit Safety and Investment Act*, which would have guaranteed minimal capital funding levels for the Maryland Transit Administration. The proposed requirements for increased capital funding were designed to ensure safe and continual operations of the Greater Baltimore Region's transit system by dedicating funds to maintain the system in a state of good repair. House Bill 368 passed the House with strong support (95-36 vote) on March 14 but did not receive a vote in the Senate Budget &



Taxation Committee prior to adjournment.

Revenue Increases



The Senate and House each advanced separate “revenue packages” to generate funds to pay for a portion of the costs related to the implementation of Kirwan Commission recommendations. At the close of session, the agreed upon package called for increasing the tobacco tax, applying the

tobacco tax to vaping and e-cigarette products, imposing a tax on digital products and services, and imposing a digital advertising gross revenues tax.

Sports Betting

The General Assembly adopted legislation that would let the voters decide in November whether or not to expand commercial gaming in Maryland to authorize sports and event betting with the revenue primarily benefiting education. The details and implementation plans would be left for the legislature to adopt at a future session. The bill also requires a study to assist minorities and women in the sports and event wagering industry and market.



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