

**2018 State of the State Address**  
**“Leading By Action”**  
**As Prepared for Delivery**  
**Wednesday, January 31, 2018**  
**Maryland State House, Annapolis**

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, Members of the General Assembly, distinguished guests, and my fellow Marylanders:

Three years ago, when I first had the honor of standing before this assembly to report on the state of our state, Maryland was at a critical turning point.

Our state economy was floundering and lagging behind the rest of the nation.

Maryland was losing businesses, jobs and taxpayers at an alarming rate.

Too many of our families and small businesses were struggling just to make ends meet.

The people of Maryland had become frustrated with politics as usual.

Our state was at a crossroads, and we faced a pivotal choice:

A choice between continuing in the same direction or putting Maryland on a new and better path.

And all of us had to make a choice between serving a political party or serving the people of Maryland.

One need only look to Washington to see the destruction that is caused when hyper-partisanship and inflammatory rhetoric permeate the debate and erode our faith in the institutions of government.

When I stood on the steps of this historic State House three years ago to give my inaugural address, I said that “The politics that have divided our nation need not divide our state.” And I warned against “Wedge politics and petty rhetoric used to belittle our adversaries and to inflame partisan divisions.”

I reminded Marylanders that our state was better than that.

Our history proved that we were better.

And for the past three years we have been.

We’ve worked hard to usher in a new spirit of bipartisanship in Annapolis, and to create an environment of trust and cooperation where the best ideas rise to the top based upon their merit, regardless of which side of the aisle they come from.

Time and again, we have chosen to engage in thoughtful and civil debate.

We have risen above the fray of partisan politics, and we have chosen to seek common sense bipartisan solutions to the serious problems that faced us.

We are living up to the great potential and promise of our state, and together, we are changing Maryland for the better.

Because of that, I am pleased to report that today the state of our state is stronger than it has been in decades, and we are forging an even stronger and brighter future for Maryland.

Through internal struggle and outward chaos, we have not faltered.

We have made progress with courage and with clarity of purpose, and our citizens are more pleased with the job that we are doing and the direction that we are heading than they have ever been before.

Together we have been doing what Marylanders do best: We are leading by our actions and by our example, and ladies and gentlemen, we cannot afford to turn back now.

Three years ago, our most pressing task was to grow the private sector, put more people to work, make Maryland more competitive, and to turn our economy around.

And that is exactly what we have done.

The day after I was sworn in, we submitted the first balanced budget in a decade, which eliminated nearly all of the \$5.1 billion dollar structural deficit which we inherited.

We did it while cutting taxes three years in a row.

And we've put all that money back into the pockets of hardworking Marylanders, retirees, and small businesses and back into our growing economy, which has helped us create an incredible economic resurgence in our state.

Businesses are now returning to and expanding in Maryland once again.

We had the best year for business in Maryland in 15 years and the best year for job growth in a decade. We went from losing 100,000 jobs to gaining more than 110,000 jobs.

We've had the fastest job growth in the mid-Atlantic region and one of the strongest economic turnarounds in America.

Maryland truly is open for business.

We are fourth among all 50 states for entrepreneurial business growth. We have the second lowest percentage of people living below the poverty level in the nation, and we have the highest median household income in America.

On growing jobs and our state economy, Maryland is leading by action and by example, and we cannot afford to turn back now.

This year, let's work together to protect hardworking Marylanders from the impact that the federal tax overhaul will have on Maryland's state and local taxes.

We may not be able to control what they do in Washington, but we certainly can come together in Annapolis to ensure that this money remains in the pockets of Maryland citizens where it belongs.

And we can protect Marylanders from health insurance rate increases caused by the failures in Washington. Let's develop bipartisan solutions to stabilize rates.

Last year we worked together with you to enact the More Jobs for Marylanders Act, which has encouraged and incentivized manufacturers to create more jobs where we needed them the most.

And we worked together to enact the Hometown Heroes Act of 2017.

This year, let's work to pass the More Jobs for Marylanders Act 2.0 to expand the reach of this successful program to additional jurisdictions and to other business sectors.

Let's expand the Hometown Heroes Act to include our correctional officers, and this year, let's finally move forward on our bill to eliminate taxes on the retirement income of our military veterans.

We agree on providing paid sick leave to more Marylanders.

But let's put aside the politics and work together to fix this flawed legislation. Don't let a bad bill kill good small businesses and jobs.

Pass our proposal to provide tax incentives for our small businesses to help offset the costs of providing these benefits to their employees.

We don't want Annapolis to become like Washington, where bad policy is passed with a promise that a fix will come later.

This issue is much too important and the impact is too far-reaching for us to risk getting it wrong.

For three straight years we have delivered record investments in education.

This year, let's continue that historic trend and do it for the fourth straight year.

Our budget provides an unprecedented \$6.5 billion for K-12 education, which is more than the legislative funding formulas call for.

We ensured that every single school system in Maryland will receive increased funding from the state.

Our capital budget invests an additional \$365 million for school construction funding, the largest investment in school construction in a decade.

Fully 70 percent of our capital budget is dedicated to education.

Let's ensure that every single child in Maryland has access to a world-class education, regardless of what neighborhood they happen to grow up in.

Maryland is home to America's most educated workforce, with the highest concentration of doctoral scientists and engineers in the nation.

We are third in the nation for research and development intensity, second among all 50 states for concentration of STEM employment, and we were recently named the most innovative state in America.

On education, Maryland is leading by action and by example, and we cannot afford to turn back now.

Let's work together to pass the Protect Our Students Act of 2018, because the status quo is simply not good enough for Maryland's children.

Let's work together to make our schools more accountable by passing the Accountability in Education Act of 2018.

No child should have to pay the price for the mistakes of adults who have failed them.

This is too important to play politics. This is about our children and their futures. It's about giving every Maryland child opportunities and a hope for a better future.

When it comes to rebuilding Maryland's transportation infrastructure, we are moving forward with nearly all of the highest priority transportation projects in every single jurisdiction all across Maryland.

We are making record investments for innovative traffic relief with major improvements to the Baltimore Beltway, I-95, the Capital Beltway, Route 270, and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway.

We have nearly 1,000 projects totaling \$9 billion currently under construction from one corner of the state to the other, and we have already repaved 8,000 lane-miles – more than one-third of the entire state highway system.

Construction of the long-anticipated Purple Line is underway, which represents the largest public-private transit project in the nation.

We have been breaking records at the Port of Baltimore for three straight years, and BWI Marshall has become the number one airport in the region and one of the most thriving airports in the nation.

On transportation infrastructure, Maryland is leading by action and by example, and we cannot afford to turn back now.

We have fully funded the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund and Program Open Space.

We brought all the stakeholders together and hammered out a compromise phosphorus management solution that is one of the most significant initiatives to clean up the Bay in a generation.

As chairman of the six-state Chesapeake Executive Council, I have been leading the fight to protect and restore federal funding for the Bay, and our administration has committed \$4 billion dollars toward wide-ranging initiatives to protect the Bay.

On its latest annual report card the Chesapeake Bay received its highest score in a quarter century.

We pushed for landmark legislation to cement our state's position as a national and international leader in combating greenhouse gas emissions.

We expanded the Climate Change Commission.

We enacted the Clean Water Commerce Act, the Clean Cars Act, and several other bills to protect our environment and to grow clean energy investment and green jobs.

And we enacted clean air standards which are stronger than 48 other states and nearly twice as strong as the Paris accord recommendations.

When it comes to safeguarding our environment, Maryland is leading by action and by example, and we cannot afford to turn back now.

Last year opioid-related deaths exceeded deaths from both firearms and motor vehicle fatalities combined.

Last March, we became the first state in the nation to declare a State of Emergency in response to this crisis.

We have committed half a billion dollars toward fighting the heroin and opioid epidemic and substance use disorders, with a four-pronged approach focused on education, prevention, treatment, and enforcement.

Yet this problem is continuing to destroy lives and tear apart families and communities in our state and all across America.

Two weeks ago, I got a letter from Karen Dolch, a mom from Salisbury.

She wrote about her son, Chad, a 4-year veteran of the United States Army who served a 15-month tour in Iraq.

When Chad returned home, he struggled with PTSD and addiction.

He went through some difficult times, but then Karen says he got clean and was turning his life around. I had the opportunity to meet Chad when I spoke at his graduation from welding school.

Karen sent a picture from that day of the three of us. I have it here with me today.

In her letter, Karen wrote that on December 17th, Chad tragically died at the age of 29 after overdosing on heroin that was mixed with morphine and fentanyl.

Chad's mom, Karen, is here with us today.

She wanted to honor Chad by showing us that, when we talk about this crisis, we are really talking about fighting for all the Chads and the Karens out there – for all the lives cut too short and all the families that will never be the same.

That's why no matter how hard it is, we cannot ever give up this fight.

We enacted tough anti-gang legislation, including a new Maryland RICO statute.

We formed a new Maryland Criminal Intelligence Network to assist police and prosecutors in going after and taking down the people who are responsible for so much of the violence in our state.

This year, let's crack down on those violent criminals who use guns to commit crimes by passing tougher minimum sentences.

And pass truth-in-sentencing legislation to require that repeat violent criminals serve their full sentences without the possibility of suspension, parole, or probation.

Let's strengthen Maryland's gang statutes and RICO law to help take down these drug dealing criminal gang enterprises.

Work with us to classify felony human trafficking as a violent crime and to finally pass the Repeat Sexual Predator Prevention Act.

And no rapist should be allowed to maintain parental rights and no victim should be forced to interact with her attacker. I commend you for finally passing the Rape Survivor Family Protection Act, and I will sign it into law the moment it reaches my desk.

This year, pass the Legislative Transparency Act of 2018 so that Maryland can join the 43 other states across America that require legislative deliberations to be livestreamed to the public.

And help us put the issue of term limits on the ballot this year for the people of Maryland to decide this issue for themselves in November.

And in order to uphold the public trust and to truly represent the interests of all the people we were elected to serve, let's put partisanship and self-interest aside and join together with the overwhelming majority of Marylanders to end the practice of partisan gerrymandering in Maryland.

Instead of becoming more like Washington, let's send a message to Washington by putting the politics aside and coming together for all Marylanders.

On that snowy day three years ago just after I took the oath of office I said, "To those who would drive us to the extremes of either party, let me remind you that Maryland has always been a state of middle temperament."

I asked that "we seek that middle ground where we can all stand together."

And ladies and gentlemen, over the past three years we have.

Together, we have put Maryland on a new and better path, and we cannot afford to turn back now.

Let's keep moving forward.

Let's continue changing Maryland for the better.

Thank you.

God bless you.

May God continue to bless the great State of Maryland.

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