

**2022 State of the State Address  
“Changing Maryland for the Better”  
As Prepared for Delivery  
Wednesday, February 2, 2022  
Maryland State House, Annapolis**

My fellow Marylanders:

I'm speaking to you tonight from the Old Senate Chamber of our historic State House in Annapolis.

It was in this very chamber that General George Washington relinquished his command of the Continental Forces, laying the foundation for a new republic with the first peaceful transition of power in our history. 238 years ago, the Revolutionary War ended right here, in this very room, with the ratification of the Treaty of Paris.

For Maryland and for our nation, this is a place where great things begin and where great things are accomplished, and it is from this hallowed place that I have the privilege to report to you on the state of our state.

What makes the state of our state strong is the caliber and character of our people.

Earlier today, we laid to rest three of our true heroes of the Baltimore City Fire Department who tragically died in the line of duty—Lt. Paul Butrim, Lt. Kelsey Sadler, and Firefighter Kenny Lacayo.

Far too often our first responders don't get the appreciation they deserve. It shouldn't take a tragedy like this to remind us of the tremendous debt we owe to all of our firefighters, police, and first responders.

In memory of Kenny, Kelsey, and Paul, I ask for all the people of Maryland to find a way to say thank you to those who run toward the danger as others run from it.

It has now been seven years since you first granted me the honor of serving as Maryland's governor, and there has not been a single day—good or bad—when I was not grateful for the privilege.

I'll never forget that snowy day when I stood on the steps of this State House to be inaugurated as the 62nd governor of Maryland.

I spoke about the wedge politics and petty rhetoric being used to belittle adversaries and to inflame partisan divisions in America.

I vowed that day that the politics that have divided our nation need not divide our state.

And I pledged 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.

I pledged to bring fiscal responsibility and common sense to our state capital, to make Maryland more competitive and our state government more responsive, to provide tax relief for families, small businesses, and retirees, to improve education for Maryland's children, to protect our environment, and to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure.

Our mission was to change Maryland for the better, and tonight, I'm proud to report that we have done exactly what we said we would do, and because of that, the state of our state is strong—by any measure, stronger and better than it was when we began our mission.

Together, we have changed Maryland for the better by facing our fiscal challenges head-on, easing the tax burden, and paving the way for historic economic growth and record job creation.

We changed Maryland for the better with record investments in education eight years in a row to prepare our children for the opportunities of the future.

We changed Maryland for the better by protecting the health care coverage of Marylanders and providing lower insurance rates for the first time in a decade.

We changed Maryland for the better with historic funding for Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts, Program Open Space, and other land preservation programs, and by setting bold goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We changed Maryland for the better with record investments in our roads, bridges, and transit systems, transformative projects to relieve some of the worst traffic congestion in America and to expand capabilities at the Port of Baltimore and BWI Marshall Airport, along with historic investment to ensure universal high-speed internet access to everyone in every corner of the state.

We have been able to accomplish these things despite some formidable and unforeseen challenges.

None of us could have imagined how we would all be tested by a once-in-a-century global pandemic and the unprecedented turmoil it caused—the lives and livelihoods lost, the unimaginable personal and economic hardship.

We stepped up and rose to the challenge by bringing to bear the entire arsenal of government and public health.

We mobilized the citizen soldiers of the Maryland National Guard to lead strike forces into nursing homes to save the lives of our most vulnerable, to stand up surge tents at hospitals, to transport life-saving equipment, and to administer tests and vaccines.

When no state in America had any testing capacity whatsoever, we led by building an entire testing infrastructure from scratch.

When hospitals were overflowing, we added 6,000 additional surge beds and stood up new field hospitals.

When we needed to reinforce our beleaguered health care workforce and emergency personnel, we activated the Maryland Responds Medical Reserve Corps and called retired nurses and nursing students into action.

We built mass testing and vaccination sites all across the state and established the nation's first Vaccine Equity Task Force to get shots into arms in hard to reach and underserved communities.

Together, we have led one of the strongest health and economic recoveries in America thanks to the heroics of our health care workers, our emergency services personnel, National Guard soldiers and airmen, and the resilience of our small business community and all the people of our state who came together, looked out for one another, and who answered the call to be 'Maryland Strong.'

We have now spent nearly two years fighting this virus and it has taken far too much from us, including, sadly, 13,316 of our fellow Marylanders.

But tonight there is hope, because with swift and decisive actions and the vigilance of Marylanders, I'm pleased to report that we have turned back another dangerous variant of COVID-19, and tomorrow, the state of emergency will end in Maryland.

Our long-term public health response will continue. Our surge capacity, our testing and tracing operations, our vaccine clinics—all those things will remain in place as part of the ongoing operations of government.

But my message to you tonight is that we must all learn to live with this virus, not to live in fear of it.

We can't let it continue to dictate how we live our lives.

Our offices and businesses need to be open. Our kids need to be in school, in-person.

Of course we will continue to follow the data and the science, and we'll keep fighting back with everything we've got. But make no mistake about it, we are moving forward full speed ahead, and we will continue to lead the nation in both health and economic recovery.

We are also going to finish the job we set out to do back in 2015.

We're going to keep changing Maryland for the better by passing more much-needed tax cuts for hardworking families, small businesses, and retirees. And fortunately, we are now in a position to do just that.

After seven years of fiscal discipline and responsible budgetary actions, record job creation and economic growth, together we successfully brought our economy back from the brink—from the 43 consecutive tax hikes that took \$10 billion from the pockets of struggling families, small businesses, and retirees; from losing 8,000 businesses and over 100,000 jobs; and from the crushing \$5.1 billion structural deficit we inherited.

We repealed the Rain Tax mandate and eliminated or reformed more than 14,000 job-killing regulations. We cut tolls at every single facility in the state—the first time tolls had been cut in Maryland in 50 years. We passed the RELIEF Act of 2021—the largest tax cut in state history—nearly unanimously, which provided \$1.45 billion in urgently needed tax relief and economic stimulus. We have now cut taxes, tolls, and fees seven years in a row by more than \$2.7 billion.

We changed the mission of state government to be unabashedly pro-jobs and pro-business, and we experienced the biggest economic turnaround in America.

We launched innovative initiatives, like More Jobs for Marylanders, which helped us go from 50th in America in manufacturing to adding more manufacturing jobs than 39 other states.

In spite of all the pressures of COVID-19, inflation, and the supply chain crisis, we were able to keep most of our economy open throughout the entire crisis.

As a result, our economic recovery is one of the very best in America, our unemployment rate is the lowest it's been since before the pandemic, and a national survey named Maryland as the most improved state for business in America.

Not only have we submitted balanced budgets every year, but for the first time in nearly a quarter century, the State of Maryland is projecting a long-term structurally balanced budget well into the future, including a \$2.5 billion surplus—the largest ever in state history—and we put a record \$3.6 billion of savings into our Rainy Day Fund.

Our fiscal health and our economy are stronger than they have been in decades. But changing Maryland for the better means continuing to help the working families and seniors on fixed income who are getting squeezed by inflation and higher costs.

So we introduced the largest tax cut package in Maryland history, more than \$4.6 billion in additional much-needed tax reductions.

Our state's sky-high retirement taxes remain the one area where we are still not effectively competing with other states. Over the course of our administration we have been successful in passing targeted retirement tax relief for our military retirees and for our hometown heroes, our law enforcement, fire and rescue, corrections, and emergency personnel. But that's not enough.

The time has come for the General Assembly to finally pass the Retirement Tax Elimination Act to eliminate every single penny of state retirement taxes for everyone, so that Marylanders who have spent their lives working and raising a family here, and contributing so much to our state, can afford to retire here in Maryland near their kids and grandkids.

Each year when I have proposed critical tax relief for seniors, legislators have said we just can't afford it.

Well, with our economy booming and our fiscal health stronger than ever before, we can't afford not to do it.

Our tax reduction package includes \$650 million more in tax cuts for hardworking families. And to help our small businesses continue to grow, we're eliminating even more costly fees and red tape.

And we're proposing legislation to codify Project Restore and to make it permanent, to incentivize new business growth and to create even more jobs in downtowns, on Main Streets, and in communities all across our state.

And we're going to enact the More Jobs for Marylanders Act 3.0, a successful program we first enacted in 2017 and then expanded in 2019, which incentivizes and encourages the creation of more jobs where we need them most.

Changing Maryland for the better also means finally enacting our legislation to combat violent crime.

Baltimore City once again ended last year with more than 300 homicides. Among the victims were more young teenagers caught in the crossfire of gang violence, along with 69-year-old Evelyn Player, who was stabbed to death at her church, and Baltimore City Police Officer Keona Holley, who was ambushed and executed in her patrol car.

On the very first day of the new year, a 16- and a 17-year-old were gunned down in a triple shooting, becoming the first victims of 2022.

Just last week, Cheryl McCormack, a 51-year-old grandmother who was working as a DoorDash driver, was gunned down during a robbery in northeast Baltimore, and Chelsey Patterson, the general manager of a popular restaurant in Little Italy, was fatally shot in Fells Point.

It was the deadliest January in the city in nearly 50 years.

The reality is, no matter how much money we invest or what state actions we take, Baltimore City will not ever get control of the violence if they can't arrest more, prosecute more, and sentence more of the most violent criminals to get them off the streets.

The people of Baltimore deserve results from their city leaders and legislators, not more empty platitudes and broken promises.

Year after year, we have introduced tough anti-violent crime legislation that is supported by more than 80% of the people of Baltimore and more than 80% of every demographic, everywhere, all across the state. But those pleas for action have repeatedly been ignored.

Enough is enough. The time has come for Baltimore City to take back its streets and communities once and for all.

Tonight, on behalf of all the people who are sick and tired of all of the senseless violence, I'm calling on the leaders in both parties, in both houses, to immediately pass and send to my desk the Violent Firearms Offender Act to increase penalties for those who use guns to commit violent crimes, and the Judicial Transparency Act, because the public has a right to know about the sentences judges are giving or not giving to the most violent offenders.

People are being shot and are dying nearly every single day. It's time to put the politics aside and to finally get this done. There can be no more excuses.

Homicides and violent crime waves are surging in nearly every major city all across the country. And the violence terrorizing our neighborhoods and cities is made worse by divisive politics and the demonization of the dedicated men and women who risk their lives every day to keep us safe.

Law enforcement agencies in Maryland and across the nation are struggling to attract and retain qualified officers. There could not possibly be a worse time for anyone to call for defunding the police or for cutting funding for public safety.

The reality is that our police are underfunded and under attack, which is why we launched a half a billion dollar Re-Fund The Police Initiative to help recruit and retain more quality officers, to increase diversity

and expand community policing efforts, to improve training to teach better de-escalation techniques, and to provide body cams and other technology and equipment upgrades for state and local police departments all across Maryland.

Since we announced our Re-Fund The Police Initiative, many cities and states have begun to follow our lead. Even some of the most progressive cities like New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, are now agreeing that we need more investment in public safety.

Time and again our police, our firefighters, and first responders bravely answer the call, and as long as I'm governor, I will continue to stand with them and continue to fight to provide them with the support and the resources they need to keep our communities safe.

Our nation is bitterly divided. We need to find a way to fix the broken and toxic politics that is tearing us apart.

We need to restore trust and fairness to our political system by allowing voters to pick their elected representatives, rather than having politicians pick their voters.

Gerrymandering is partisanship at its worst. It's a cancer on our democracy, and Maryland has the unfortunate distinction of having the worst, most gerrymandered districts in America.

Maryland legislators had the chance to right that wrong.

We introduced fair maps, which were created by Maryland's nonpartisan Citizens Redistricting Commission. But legislators replaced them with maps that they drew up in secret, behind closed doors, which have been universally criticized, receiving a flunking 'F' grade by the Princeton Gerrymandering Project.

These maps make a mockery of our democracy. Fortunately, the courts—not the legislature—will be the final arbiter.

In his farewell address, George Washington warned that partisanship would create a 'spirit of revenge' that would undermine the 'reins of government' and lead to the 'ruins of public liberty.'

My fellow Marylanders, in this historic place where the founding principles of American democracy were born, and here in our great state where Francis Scott Key wrote of a flag that was still there, where Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman forged the path to freedom, where Thurgood Marshall fought for equal justice under law, we still believe in the power of coming together to change things for the better, and we still believe that what unites us is greater than that which divides us.

To those who say that America is too divided, that our political system is too broken and can't be fixed, I would argue that we have already shown a better path forward.

And if we can accomplish that here in Maryland, then there is no place in America where these very same principles cannot succeed.

So tonight, as we reflect on all that we have accomplished together, and as we embark on the hard work still left to be done, I want to once again say thank you to the people of Maryland for giving me this incredible honor of serving as your governor.

This truly is the most important work of my life, and I pledge to you that I am going to keep giving this job everything I've got, every single day that I am given.

Let's finish the work we started together.

Let's keep changing Maryland for the better, and let's continue to set an example for the rest of the nation, so that America can once again be a shining example to the world.

May God bless the great State of Maryland and the United States of America.