

bring our State Police nearer the optimum strength for adequate highway policing.

As I said to you in my message three weeks ago, there are signs that our efforts of the past three years to rehabilitate the oyster resources of Maryland have begun to pay dividends. The Department of Tidewater Fisheries reports to me that the oyster yield of the first three months of this season is up by 93,473 bushels, or 16 per cent over the first three months of last season. Recognizing the splendid progress that has been made in shell planting, I am proposing that additional funds be allowed the department to continue its Oyster Propagation Program. Adequate money is also made available for the Department to sustain its good record in law enforcement and public safety.

As I have said, there is not time in this message to recite in any great detail the appropriations for all State departments, agencies and commissions which are included in this budget. It is enough to say, I believe, that all requests were examined with great care, and in each instance where the need was clear, funds for improvements and expansion were allowed—for economic development, for our penal institutions, for the enlargement of parks and recreational areas, for planning, for strengthening our judiciary and for a variety of other governmental services.

The budget for capital improvements reflects this Administration's desire to provide the physical facilities which are needed to carry on the various governmental functions. In accordance with recommendations made to me by the State Planning Department, I am recommending that loans be authorized in the amount of \$23,647,700. You will note that more than half of this amount—52.2 per cent or \$12,345,800, to be exact—is earmarked for education. The second largest amount, \$6,948,000, is to be used to improve housing conditions in our prison system. The Department of Forests and Parks is allowed \$2,076,500, primarily for the acquisition of land for parks, and \$1,604,000 is assigned for the expansion and improvement of mental health facilities.

Maryland's strong debt position is supported by such factors as the continued steady growth in the assessable base and the low ration of debt to assessed valuation, which has enabled us to maintain for many years a Triple-A credit rating. But here I think I should pause to inject a note of caution. In addition to the heavy demands made upon us for new and improved State facilities during the past few years, we have been called upon to offer the State's