

FULL TEXT: Governor Hogan's 2021 State of the State Address
2021 State of the State Address
As Prepared for Delivery
Wednesday, February 3, 2021
Maryland State House, Annapolis

Watch the 2021 State of the State address live.

My fellow Marylanders:

Although it seems like a lifetime ago, just a year has passed since we last gathered with members of the General Assembly for the annual State of the State address.

Last year, I spoke about how Maryland was setting a shining example for the rest of America because of our shared conviction that there is no problem we face that hard work, honesty, and courage cannot solve if we work together.

Over this past year, as we have faced unimaginable challenges, those words were truly put to the test. But together we rose to the challenge, and it is because of the courage, the sacrifices, and the strength of the people of Maryland that the state of our state is more resilient than it has ever been before.

Just days after that last State of the State address, I convened a meeting in Washington with all of the nation's governors and the federal government's top public health experts, including Dr. Anthony Fauci and CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield, where we received a harrowing warning of the imminent threat of a novel coronavirus that was about to reach our shores.

Every single day since that day, we have had to take unprecedented actions that were unthinkable just a year ago. We opened new field hospitals and added 6,000 additional surge capacity hospital beds that we prayed would never have to be filled. We scoured the world searching for life-saving PPE test kits and supplies. We issued over 85 public health emergency orders. We called up the Maryland National Guard to save the lives of our nursing home residents.

Last spring, no state in America had any COVID-19 testing capacity whatsoever. As of today, the State of Maryland has now conducted 7.1 million COVID-19 tests.

Just a few months ago, a COVID-19 vaccine seemed like a distant dream. But now we have begun the greatest peacetime undertaking that America has ever launched—an all-hands-on-deck effort to produce, distribute, and administer hundreds of millions of COVID-19 vaccines across the nation.

As of today, Maryland has administered more than 570,000 vaccines. Far more Marylanders have been vaccinated in just the first weeks than the total number infected by the virus over the past year, and we are rapidly building a statewide distribution infrastructure as we anxiously await the additional supply that is so desperately needed. We are prepared to deploy whatever supply the federal government is able to produce.

Unfortunately, right now the amount of vaccines being allocated by the federal

government is just a tiny fraction of what we need. That is the hard truth not just for us in Maryland, but for every state in America.

I have been urging the Biden administration to take every possible step to dramatically increase the pace of vaccine production and distribution. And we are hopeful that another promising vaccine candidate could be approved by the FDA and soon on the way to us—perhaps even in the coming weeks. And this one is actually being manufactured right here in Maryland.

We will continue doing everything in our power at the state level to utilize every dose we are given as thousands of heroes all across the state work around the clock to get more shots into the arms of our most vulnerable citizens just as soon as they are made available to us.

And I want to assure you that we will not rest until vaccines are available to every single Marylander who wants one. These vaccines are safe and effective, and they are the result of groundbreaking cooperation between America's leading medical experts and pharmaceutical companies and a transparent and rigorous review process led by the FDA.

Getting vaccinated will help keep you, your family, and your community healthy and safe. We urge every Marylander to get a vaccine when one becomes available to you. It will prevent more illness, hospitalizations, and deaths, and it is the best hope for bringing this pandemic to an end.

More than 350,000 Marylanders have been infected by COVID-19. Over 32,000 have been hospitalized. I'll never forget the day last March when I had the sad duty to report the first death of a Marylander from COVID-19.

Now nearly a year later, it seems as if people have simply become numb to the daily reports on the number of deaths. But my heart breaks for every single one of them. Each and every one of those victims leaves behind countless loved ones and countless unfinished dreams. We have all mourned, lost family members, friends, co-workers, and neighbors who we have lost to this terrible virus.

And I'd like to ask you to please join me in a moment of silent prayer for the 7,043 Marylanders, the nearly 450,000 Americans, and the more than 2.2 million people around the world who have died from this horrific global pandemic.

As we've battled against this crisis day and night over the past year, I've sometimes reflected on other challenges we've faced together over these last six years. Like just 90 days into my term when the people of Maryland rallied behind our largest city, which was beset by the worst riots in 47 years. And 60 days after that when I was diagnosed with cancer, Marylanders lifted me up and helped keep me Maryland Strong.

Throughout the entire six years since then, but especially over this past year, nearly every day I've continued to see that very same Maryland Strong spirit from unsung heroes all across our state.

Our healthcare heroes who have been working on the front lines showing such amazing courage, compassion, and strength.

Like Daisy Solares from Baltimore City, a respiratory therapist at the University of Maryland Medical Center, who has been treating COVID-19 patients throughout the pandemic. Daisy was one of the first Marylanders to be

vaccinated. She received the vaccine in honor of her father who died from COVID-19. Daisy says that the vaccine was "a step forward at healing" for her family.

All the small businesses who have had to make difficult changes to continue serving their customers safely and to keep their workers employed.

Like Route One Apparel—the pandemic hit their business hard and they were struggling just to hold on. But then owner Ali von Paris decided to start selling masks and pandemic-themed apparel. So rather than having to lay people off, they were able to hire even more workers and to give back by donating masks to front line healthcare workers.

Our incredible teachers, who have adapted to the challenges, like Tina Baker, a special education teacher in Carroll County, who works with autistic students every day and who has had the courage to provide in-person instruction since September so that her students won't fall behind. Tina's superintendent says she "does whatever it takes to support her students."

Our essential workers in grocery stores, pharmacies, supply warehouses, and in transportation who have worked day in and day out to provide the goods and services we all depend on. Our farmers and watermen who have kept our food supply chain functioning smoothly. And the citizen soldiers of the Maryland National Guard who have helped build hospital capacity, administer COVID-19 tests and vaccines, and to distribute millions of meals to hungry kids.

And when our democracy itself came under attack, they were first to arrive to protect our nation's capital. We will never know all of the individual acts of courage and kindness that have powered our state through this crisis. But it is clear that the people of Maryland have stepped up and been Maryland Strong.

We have taken unprecedented executive actions to help those impacted by this pandemic, delivering more than \$700 million in emergency state economic assistance to struggling families and small businesses who needed it the most. Grants for hard-hit restaurants and small businesses, the layoff aversion fund to save thousands of jobs, support for farmers to keep the food supply chain going, direct assistance for struggling families, initiatives to help keep people in their homes, expand affordable housing, and to support the food banks who are helping those truly in need.

It has made a tremendous difference, but now we need legislative action.

Our top legislative priority is the RELIEF Act of 2021. This emergency legislation will provide more than \$1 billion in immediate tax relief and economic stimulus for struggling Maryland families, small businesses, and those who have lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tonight, I am once again calling on the legislature to pass this bill and get it to my desk as soon as possible, so that I can sign it into law, so that it can take effect immediately. There is absolutely nothing more important for the legislature to do, and Marylanders simply cannot afford to wait.

But short-term emergency economic relief isn't enough. We also need to lay the foundation for strong, long lasting economic recovery.

From 2015 to 2020, we achieved the greatest economic turnaround in America with

more businesses open and more jobs created than ever before in the history of our state. And I have no doubt that we can and we will do it again. I ask that my partners in the legislature help us make it more affordable to live, raise a family, start a business, and to retire here in our beautiful state.

Lifelong Marylanders are moving to other states for one reason: our state's sky-high retirement taxes. We cannot let this keep happening. So once again, we are proposing more than \$1 billion in tax cuts for every single retired Marylander, which will help keep tens of thousands of Marylanders from fleeing our state. Now more than ever, Marylanders need to be able to keep more of their hard-earned money in their own pockets.

In spite of the national economic distress, for the seventh consecutive year, our FY 2022 Maryland budget is 100% structurally balanced with absolutely no tax increases, with no layoffs or furloughs of our hardworking state employees and without cutting any essential services for Maryland citizens. Maryland has not had a single tax increase since I was elected governor.

During this time of unprecedented crisis, we need to be lifting people up—not dragging them down. The last thing Marylanders need is higher taxes. And that is a guiding principle of our economic recovery budget. Our budget provides historically high record funding for K-12 education, public health, and crime prevention—not only to address the visible consequences of COVID-19, but also the often unseen toll it's taken on our communities.

Every single child in Maryland deserves a world-class education. That's why we are proposing that every school system receives more funding, regardless of declining enrollment figures. And we are expanding investment for full-day pre-K targeted tutoring, scholarships for deserving students to attend non-public schools, and we are proposing the largest investment in school construction in state history to bring every single one of the state's schools into the 21st century.

It is critical that we give our students the chance to get safely back into the classrooms. During this entire crisis, we have always followed the science, and the science is clear. Dr. Fauci, Dr. Scott Gottlieb, the experts at the CDC, and the American Academy Pediatrics all agree that schools should be reopened and that they can be reopened safely.

I want to commend all the teachers, administrators, parents, and students who have adapted under difficult and trying circumstances and have already shown this is possible. It's time to get our students back into the classrooms where they belong.

Even during the toughest moments of this past year, I still remain incredibly optimistic about the resilience of our people and the future of our state. After the longest and most difficult year anyone could imagine, I know that Marylanders are frustrated and completely fed up with this virus. Believe me, no one is more eager than I am to put this pandemic behind us.

We all desperately want to return to our normal lives. But no matter how difficult it is to hear, you deserve the truth. The truth doesn't know party affiliation. It doesn't care what any of us think or what we want. So many of the problems we face today as a nation are because politicians refuse to tell the hard truths when it doesn't fit their agenda.

But I have always been a straight shooter, so here's the truth. Getting a vaccine to everyone who wants one will be a much longer and much more difficult process than any of us would like it to be.

It is going to require a great deal of patience for many months while states continue to push the federal government and the manufacturers to increase the production and to drastically increase the allocations they provide to the states. In the meantime, we must continue to take the necessary precautions, which keep our families, our friends, and our neighbors healthy and safe.

This crisis will not end overnight, but together we will bring it to an end. We will get our kids back to school, get people back to work, and get life back to normal once again.

A better future is on the horizon where we can get back to doing the everyday things we all miss, like celebrating with friends and family at a crowded restaurant or taking our kids and grandkids to a baseball game.

A better future where our kids are thriving, our communities are safer, and our economy is booming once again. We will get there, but we must continue looking out for one another and continue working together to build that better future.

Let's continue to set a shining example for the rest of America by showing that we are Maryland Strong, that we refuse to succumb to the divisiveness and dysfunction that is infecting our national politics. Because the bonds that bind us together as Marylanders are greater than all that divides us.

We will get through this together, and Maryland will emerge stronger, better, and more resilient than ever before.

Thank you, God bless you.

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

Read the 2021 State of the State fact sheet.