

**REMARKS AS PREPARED: 2024 State of the State**

Madam Speaker;

Mister President;

Madam Lieutenant Governor;

Members of the General Assembly;

Members of our Congressional delegation;

Colleagues in state and local government;

My fellow Marylanders:

**One year ago, we began our work together.**

We knew our state had boundless opportunities and blinding potential.

But we were leaving too much on the table.

One year later, we still have work to do.

We learned a lot of lessons. And solving big problems can't happen overnight.

**But change is happening.**

**And today: The state of our state is strong.**

We have announced the creation of nearly **40,000** new jobs, many of them in communities that have been historically left behind.

We have the lowest unemployment rate in the country for the **fifth month in a row.**

Crime is down – and homicides in **Baltimore City** are the lowest they've been in **nine years**.

And communities that have gone underestimated and undervalued now have a seat at the table in the halls of power.

**I'm proud of WHAT we're doing. But I'm most proud of HOW we're doing it.**

The executive and the legislature are working together again.

We **chose** to sweat the details of governing, knowing that our constituents deserve nothing less.

And by moving in partnership, we've helped make life better for the people we serve.

We launched a frontal assault on child poverty that will lift **a combined 160,000 children** to the next rung on the economic ladder.

We returned stolen **SNAP benefits** to thousands of Marylanders living paycheck-to-paycheck.

We protected **5,000** Maryland children who were at risk of having their **Medicaid** coverage taken away.

We worked with **farmers and watermen** to get healthy meals to food deserts.

We positioned Maryland to meet our **climate goals** and lead in the cleanup of the **Chesapeake Bay**.

**We got together, and we got big stuff done.**

These aren't just **OUR** wins. They're **Maryland's** wins.

I know I talk a lot about partnership.

If the state received a nickel every time I said the word “partnership,” our budget problems would be solved!

**But partnership isn’t the goal. Fulfilling the promise of Maryland is the goal.**

**Partnership is just how we get there.**

For too long, we watched the executive pick fights with the legislature in the media – instead of showing real leadership and engagement in the **State House**.

**So we’ve decided to move differently. Our state is going to be better because of it.**

The challenges will be shared, the setbacks will be shared – but the victories will be shared too.

We can't agree on everything.

But we can – and will – work together toward common goals.

And I want to talk about those shared goals today.

**Tomorrow, our administration will unveil our plan to guide our work together.**

**It's the first State Plan in nearly a decade.**

It doesn't just set the agenda for the next **three months**, it will chart the course for the **next three years**.

Our State Plan is about more than big aspirational targets.

We've laid out specific, actionable, realistic, and measurable goals.

We've built these priorities by listening to the people who sent us here: **Our constituents.**

Last year, we went to your districts with you.

We toured an electric vehicle plant in **Hagerstown**, and we sat down with students in **Glen Burnie** to talk about gun violence.

We drove tractors with farmers on the **Eastern Shore**, and we grieved together in **Washington County** after the tragic and unconscionable killing of **Judge Andrew Wilkinson**.

In our first year, we traveled with you to **all twenty-four jurisdictions** in Maryland.

**We listened to the people – together.**

**Our State Plan is not a reflection of OUR aspirations – it's a reflection of THEIRS.**

Today, I want to talk about what we heard.

**First: We heard that people want us to make Maryland safer.**

Public safety remains our administration's top priority.

We will protect Marylanders where they live, work, worship, and go to school.

**Hate has no home in the State of Maryland.**

And if you talk to people in our neighborhoods, they'll tell you this isn't a discussion that can happen in absolutes.

We need to move beyond the simplicity of how pundits talk about public safety – and move toward the complexity of how people experience public safety.

The sound of a police siren has a different pitch depending on where you grew up.

I felt handcuffs on my wrists when I was eleven years old; because our community was overpoliced, and we knew it.

But we still wanted to feel protected from violent crime.

People shouldn't have to choose between feeling safe in their skin and feeling safe in their communities.

Yet these are the kinds of false choices that dominate the public safety debate!

Do you want to support law enforcement or do you want to build stronger neighborhoods?

Do you want to hold criminals accountable or do you want to focus on rehabilitation?

We're told to pick a side – often by people who frankly have no interest in solving the problem!

To break these false choices, we need everyone at the table.

Our administration will continue an **all-of-the-above approach to public safety**;

We will listen to law enforcement AND the communities they protect;

We will listen to State's Attorneys AND our public defenders;

We will listen to elected leaders AND our local advocates.

**We're up against new challenges, so we need to come up with new solutions.**

Our state is facing record high vacancies in public safety jobs.

We need to address them – and we will, with legislation we've introduced.

Marylanders are seeking justice for victims of crime – more accountability for people who break the law – and better rehabilitation for our children.

We must answer them – and we will, by working in partnership with the **General Assembly**.

Neighborhoods are calling for us to get these illegal guns off our streets.

We must hear them – and we have;

And I'm proud that Maryland will be the first state to answer President Biden's call to launch a statewide **Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention**.

So to the people who said we need to make Maryland a safer place for all: **We've heard you, and we're moving**.

**Second: We heard that people want us to make Maryland more affordable**.

**In 2022, Maryland was ranked the seventh most expensive state to live in**. And that stat tells a story.

It's the story of the entrepreneur in **Cumberland** with a bold idea for a new business, but who doesn't have the money to make rent this month – let alone start a company.

It's the story of a single mom in **Leonardtwn** who works multiple jobs just to put food on the table.

This year, we will address two big items on every family budget: **Housing and child care.**

Most Marylanders in rental properties put **a third** of their monthly paycheck toward rent.

Many can no longer afford to buy a home in the same neighborhood where they grew up.

Our state faces a problem of supply and demand:

Prices go up because we don't have enough homes;

Building more will bring prices down.

I've introduced **three housing bills** to address this problem.

We will create new financial tools to drive development and redevelopment in communities that need it most.

We will build new pathways to homeownership and wealth creation.

We will stand up for renters and confront the harsh truth that Maryland has the highest eviction filing rate in America.

We will cut government red tape that makes it harder to build quality housing...

... We must protect our FARM LAND and WILD HABITATS. **BUT**: We need to make sure we are also incentivizing housing in places where we **should** build.

This is about people's lives and livelihoods.

We need to make it easier for people to live here, to stay here, and to retire here.

To that end, we've assembled the most comprehensive housing package that any Maryland administration has introduced in years;

**And we will work together to get it done.**

But making life easier for working families doesn't end with housing.

Last month, the **Comptroller** released a study outlining the affordability problems Maryland families face every day.

Her report highlighted that as the cost of child care **INCREASES**, overall female employment **DECREASES** by **5%**

**And it's why our proposed budget includes the single largest increase in funding for child care in Maryland history.**

It's going to support **45,000** Maryland children this year.

**And we can make these investments in child care and housing without raising taxes on Marylanders!**

There are leaders in this chamber who have always fought for kitchen table issues.

I know because I get to partner with someone who has led this work for two and a half decades: **Speaker Adrienne Jones.**

Because of Speaker Jones, Maryland leads the nation in making prescription drugs more affordable;

Because of Speaker Jones, **reproductive HEALTH CARE** isn't just a right for Maryland women and families – **reproductive HEALTH CARE** is more affordable too!

Speaker Jones: Thank you for your leadership.

So to the people who said we need to make Maryland more affordable: **We've heard you, and we're moving.**

**Third: We heard that people want us to make Maryland more competitive.**

Last year, we got Maryland's economy moving.

We secured federal investments in the **Frederick Douglass Tunnel project.**

We ensured that the new **FBI headquarters** will be located in **Prince George's County.**

**We kept the Orioles in Baltimore for years to come.**

We delivered over **1.4 billion dollars** to small and minority owned businesses through the Board of Public Works.

We provided more than **130,000 laptops to underserved households** to narrow the digital divide.

And we worked to **accelerate the clean energy transition** in every part of our state.

I'm grateful for **President Biden, our federal delegation,** and all of the **state, local, and municipal leaders** who've been fighting for these projects since Day One.

Together, we proved that Maryland can win the moment;

And together, we will build on our progress.

We will invest in industries of the future – **with funding for life sciences, biotech, data centers, and cyber.**

We will cut red tape so Maryland is the **friendliest state in the nation to start a business.**

We will make reforms to the **procurement process** so the State of Maryland can be a true partner to entrepreneurs.

And we will engage in a robust debate on how Maryland funds **transportation projects** across the state.

We need to make it easier for people to travel from where they live to where opportunity lies.

**But the State of Maryland has funded transportation in the same way for a decade!** And that needs to change.

**AND:** To win the **NEXT** decade, we need to make Maryland the best state in the country for our kids.

When our young people get the tools they need to strengthen their minds and hearts, **they grow up to dream and lead.**

That's why we must build stronger pathways to success for our young people, no matter the road they choose.

We need to work with our friends in labor and business to grow **apprenticeships and job training.**

We need to keep investing in **substance use services, mental health, and lead abatement for children and families.**

**And we need to honor our pledge to make Maryland schools the best in the country.**

The time to support our students, our educators, and our public schools **is now!**

For the second year in a row, our administration has proposed record funding for **K-12 schools** and fully funded the **Blueprint for Maryland's Future.**

The Blueprint is a once-in-a-generation opportunity. We can seize that opportunity – but only if we do it in partnership.

We must bring together local electeds, school districts, legislators, **and yes, the governor's office too!**

We're going to get this right. **But we have to be clear-eyed, committed, and united** to make it real.

**Money is important. But strategy, accountability, and partnership are imperative.**

We need to spend smarter across all state programs – in a way that respects the taxpayer, follows data, and responds to the needs of our communities.

Last month, we unveiled landmark legislation guided by that approach.

It's called the **ENOUGH Act**. And it will continue our assault on child poverty.

**Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments and Households** – that’s what ENOUGH stands for.

But it’s more than an acronym. It’s a governing philosophy.

We believe the people closest to the problems are closest to the solutions;

If **THEY** offer the vision, **WE** can offer the support.

The ENOUGH Act is about moving in partnership to create safe and thriving communities;

It’s about moving in partnership to support healthy and economically secure families;

And it’s about moving in partnership to ensure access to high-quality education and health care for our children.

I'm proud to stand with leaders who have championed this kind of work for years – and have reached out to communities that have been left behind.

I'm talking about people like **Chairwoman Vanessa Atterbeary**;

**President Pro Tem Malcolm Augustine**;

And members of the **Legislative Black Caucus** – and their fearless leader, **Chair Jheanelle Wilkins**!

Now is the time to make work, wages, and wealth more accessible!

Now is the time to drive economic growth in all of our communities, including communities of color!

Now is the time to narrow the racial wealth gap – and we are going to be unapologetic about it!

So to the people who said we need to make Maryland more competitive: **We've heard you, and we're moving.**

**Fourth and finally: We heard that people want us to continue making Maryland the state that serves.**

That means supporting those who run toward the danger instead of running away from it;

That means standing with our state workers, who often go unsung and unheard;

And that means uplifting the families of those who put everything on the line to keep us safe.

We will address each of these goals with policy and partnership.

This year, we've introduced legislation to **ensure our firefighters receive the medical benefits they deserve.**

We've worked with unions to deliver a **raise to state employees** for the second year in a row.

And we are working together to ensure that our military families aren't forgotten.

When I deployed to **Afghanistan**, I thought military service was toughest on our **soldiers**. After I deployed, I realized it was toughest on our **families**.

Today, I'm thinking about two people who know that struggle: **Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller** and **First Lady Dawn Moore**.

Our administration has declared 2024 the **Year for Military Families in the State of Maryland**.

We will uplift Maryland servicemembers, military spouses, and caregivers by expanding job opportunities and securing better benefits.

And the **Lieutenant Governor**, the **First Lady**, and our **Secretary of Veterans Affairs** will lead that campaign!

This year, we will also **double** the number of Marylanders in the **Service Year Option**.

I'm proud to be up here with the person who started this work before I took office: **Senate President Bill Ferguson**.

President Ferguson: Thank you for your leadership.

**Maryland Corps** paved the way. And together, our state service programs are changing lives.

I'm proud that we have one of our founding Service Year members in the gallery.

His name is **Tamir**.

He was born and raised in **Western Maryland**.

And he is serving in the **Asian American Center of Frederick** to preserve and celebrate AAPI history.

**Tamir**: You are the future of our state. It's because of you that Maryland will be the best place in the world to change the world.

**Let's give him a round of applause!**

So to the people who said we need to continue making Maryland the state that serves: **We hear you, and we're moving.**

**These are the four pillars of our success this year:**

**We will make Maryland safer.**

**We will make Maryland more affordable.**

**We will make Maryland more competitive.**

**And we will continue to make Maryland the state that serves.**

To get there, we need the partnership of our legislators;

We need the partnership of our constitutional officers;

We need the partnership of our county executives and local elected officials;

We need the partnership of our union leaders, community stakeholders, advocates, philanthropists, households, neighborhoods, and businesses.

We need the partnership of people who serve not just as our inspiration, but also as our guides...

... People like **Michelle Taylor**.

Michelle works in a community health center that treats Marylanders who've been turned away by other providers:

Marylanders living paycheck-to-paycheck;

Marylanders in the LGBTQIA+ community;

Marylanders without health insurance.

She's the mother of a beautiful daughter named **Diamonique** – and both of them are with us today.

**Could you please stand and be recognized?**

We need the partnership of people like **Cleoda Walker**.

Miss Cleo is a village elder of **Cherry Hill**.

She sees the promise in every child – and her mission in life is to steer kids, youth, and adults away from violence and toward opportunity.

She believes in the power of partnership and prevention – and her legacy will endure in the future leaders she has mentored, guided, and inspired.

She's **eighty-two years young**, and she is with us today.

Could you please raise your hand, and we'll give you a big round of applause?

We need the partnership of people like **Dr. Elizabeth Clayborne**.

Dr. Clayborne is a mom of two and an adjunct assistant professor at the University of Maryland.

She loves teaching medicine.

But she always wanted to be an entrepreneur.

As a woman of color, she struggled to find capital to get her idea off the ground.

But Dr. Clayborne doesn't give up!

She was six months pregnant at the height of COVID – and STILL went into work on the front lines at Prince George's Hospital Center!

Eventually, she raised enough money to start her business.

And today, she is the **Founder and CEO of her own medical device company that's focused on helping children and families;**

**And it's located right here in Maryland.**

**She is with us today!** Dr. Clayborne, will you please stand and be recognized?

Michelle, Miss Cleo, and Dr. Clayborne remind us that **the work takes all of us.**

In **First Corinthians**, **Paul the Apostle** writes about love.

He tells us:

“Love is patient and kind...

It keeps no record of being wrong...

It does not rejoice about injustice;

But rejoices whenever the truth wins out.”

**I think partnership is the same way.**

Partnership doesn't keep score.

Partnership has no ego.

**And partnership isn't partisan.**

Partnership is what we did when we learned about **Charlotte Hall.**

I know everyone in this chamber – regardless of party – was enraged and disturbed by the level of disregard and neglect shown to our patriots.

Republicans like **Jack Bailey** worked with Democrats like **Brian Crosby** to respond.

Our administration, led by **Secretary Woods** – a combat veteran himself – coordinated with local, state, and national leaders to get to work.

**Three months ago**, I visited **Charlotte Hall**. I heard from veterans about how much our teamwork meant.

One of them said something I won't forget:

**“We made ‘thank you for your service’ actually mean something again...”**

... He was talking about all of us.

Partnership is what we did when a storm hit **Westminster** in **August**.

The rain and the wind knocked down **thirty utility poles.**

**Thirty-three adults and fourteen children were trapped in their cars for hours under live wires.**

If one of them got out of their car, it could have been catastrophic.

But we worked with local leadership across the political spectrum;

We worked with law enforcement;

And we worked with the **Department of Emergency Management** to get the situation under control.

I visited **Westminster** the next morning. I walked through damage and debris.

And I stood there relieved knowing that all **forty-seven** Marylanders had gotten home safe!

**When things are hard, partnership only becomes more important.**

We need to stand united – with a clear commitment to doing the work, and with a clear understanding that the months and years ahead will be hard...

... But if there's one thing the last twelve months have taught us, it's that Marylanders do hard things – **and they want us to accomplish hard things in partnership.**

**This will be Maryland's decade.**

**Not because we say so, but because we make it so – together.**

**Thank you, God bless the great State of Maryland, and  
let's leave no one behind.**