

JOSELINE A. PEÑA-MELNYK
Legislative District 21
Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties

Health and Government
Operations Committee

Subcommittees
Public Health and Long Term Care
Government Operations



The Maryland House of Delegates
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Dear Neighbors:

Greetings from Annapolis! The Maryland General Assembly has just concluded the 2009 Legislative Session, and while we had to make many difficult budget decisions in the face of a \$2.5 billion operating deficit, we also enacted important new public policies that will impact your every day lives. I wanted to share with you news about legislation that may be of interest to you as well as information about bills I sponsored that became law.

Maryland continues to suffer from what is now considered a global economic recession; as a result, the General Assembly to balance the FY 2010 budget made reductions to nearly every state agency, cut more than 100 vacant positions in addition to the 1,000 vacant positions eliminated by the Governor's original budget proposal, and saved millions more by furloughing state employees for 2-5 days this year. The state would have faced an even bigger budget shortfall, but Maryland received \$1.3 billion in federal stimulus funds under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

To protect those hardest hit by the downturn, we enacted several safeguards including:

- extending unemployment benefits to part-time workers;
- establishing in cases of employment discrimination that each new discriminatory paycheck resets the clock on the statute of limitations so it does not run out before victims realize they are being treated unfairly;
- notifying tenants in writing that they are occupying a property in foreclosure before their lease can be terminated and they can be evicted;
- prohibiting gas and electric utility shutoffs when temperatures fall below 32 degrees or rise above 95; and
- making it a crime to knowingly obtain by deception, intimidation or undue influence the property of a person who is 68 years or older. If the value of the property is less than \$500, the crime will be prosecuted as a misdemeanor, if the property value exceeds \$500, it will be prosecuted as a felony.

Prince George's County Legislation

- **Speed Cameras, HB 1023:** This Prince George's County bill died in committee; however, the General Assembly instead passed **SB 277**, a statewide measure authorizing the use of cameras in areas where the posted speed is 35 mph or less

and limiting use of cameras to highway work and school zones. Cameras will only be in operation in school zones from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday.

- **Prince George's Hospital Authority, HB 1486:** This legislation extends the bidding process for a new corporation to take over operation of the Prince George's Hospital System from Dimensions.

Anne Arundel Legislation

- **Compensation for Student School Board Member, HB 348:** In lieu of payment, this bill provides a \$6,000 scholarship to the student member of the Anne Arundel County Board of Education.

Because I serve on the Health and Government Operations Committee, many of my bills relate to health care access, covered services, and reimbursement for providers. Of the 19 bills I sponsored this session, I am proud to report that 11 became law. Following is a summary of those bills, beginning with measures that address health care.

Health Related Legislation

- **HMO Payments to Out-of-Plan Providers, HB 255:** This bill sets new rates that Health Maintenance Organizations must pay for covered services that are provided by out-of-plan physicians and hospitals.
- **Breast Cancer Screening, HB 405:** Health insurers in Maryland will be required to follow the American Cancer Society's guidelines for mammograms and provide coverage for the procedure every year for women beginning in their 40's. The new provision is the same standard used in Maryland law for colorectal cancer screening.
- **Electronic Health Records, HB 706:** This legislation requires the creation of state regulations directing that insurers provide incentives for health care providers to use electronic health records. If the provisions of the regulations comply with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the state will be eligible for federal funds for implementation.

Other Legislation

- **Death Certificate Correction, HB 127:** This bill requires the state to include with every copy of a death certificate completed by the Chief Medical Examiner a notice advising families of their right to appeal an initial denial of a request to correct the cause and manner of death recorded.
- **Minority Business Enterprise Certification, HB 471:** Under this bill, the cap on personal net worth for purposes of minority business enterprise certification will be raised from \$1.5 million to \$1.75 million and then adjusted annually in accordance with the Consumer Price Index.
- **Residential Property in Foreclosure, HB 640:** This is authorizing legislation that enables a city or county government to pass a local law requiring that it be notified within five days when foreclosure is filed on residential property. The notification requirement will provide more timely information for local enforcement agencies on properties that have been vacated and become the subject of complaints for code violations or possible criminal activity.

- **Minority Business Enterprise Participation, HB 641:** This legislation will allow a woman who is also a member of an ethnic or racial minority group to be certified as a minority business enterprise in that category in addition to the gender category.
- **Child Fatality Review, HB 705:** This bill authorizes Maryland's participation in the national Child Death Review Case Reporting System and will assist the state and its local review teams to analyze root causes of child fatalities and to plan prevention programs, legislation and other strategies to reduce the incidence of child death.
- **Prince George's County Wine Festival, HB 962:** The bill creates a two-day wine festival license to be issued by the county's Board of License Commissioners for an event to promote Maryland wineries.

Other Legislation

Smart Growth and Environmental Protection

- **Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act:** This legislation mandates a 25 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 and emphasizes the creation of new, green jobs.
- **Smart and Sustainable Growth Act:** This bill clarifies that local governments must actually implement and follow the comprehensive land use and master plans that they develop to ensure orderly growth.

Bond Bills

The 21st Delegation sponsored bills to provide state financing for two capital projects:

- Laurel Advocacy and Referral Service, which received \$100,000. LARS has outgrown its facility, partly a testament to the good work it is doing to help the poor and partly as a result of the significant increase in demand for services because of the economy. It will combine the bond money with a county grant and other in-kind donations to add office and counseling space, larger storage areas and an expanded food pantry.
- Laurel Boys and Girls Club, which received \$100,000. The Laurel Boys and Girls Club is located in a 19th Century building on Montgomery Street in Laurel that is in constant need of updating and repair.

Although not all of my bills passed, I am pleased by those that did, and I am already planning to reintroduce in the 2010 session some of those that did not. I appreciate you sharing your ideas and concerns and providing feedback on important issues of the day, particularly during session. I am fond of reminding constituents that oftentimes your suggestions, based on personal experiences, become my best bills.

It is a great honor to represent and serve you, and I welcome your calls and emails throughout the year. My Annapolis office is staffed three days a week during the interim session, so please don't hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you and perhaps even seeing you at a community event in the coming months.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseline", written in a cursive style. The signature is centered on a light blue rectangular background.

Joseline Peña-Melnyk