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Calvert County

Economic Matters Committee

Subcommittees

Business Regulation

Property and Casualty Insurance

Public Utilities

Chair, Calvert County House Delegation



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Dear Neighbor,

It is an honor to serve you in the Maryland House of Delegates. The 2025 Legislative Session, which concluded on April 7, 2025, brought significant challenges to Maryland's economic vitality, community well-being, and family life. Below, I highlight key outcomes, focusing on our fight for fiscal responsibility, personal freedoms, and educational opportunity.

Maryland Freedom Caucus: A Voice for Accountability

As a co-founder and member of the Maryland Freedom Caucus, I'm proud that our efforts gained national recognition this session. Joined by Congressman Andy Harris and former Governor Bob Ehrlich, we addressed Maryland's looming fiscal challenges and advocated for common-sense priorities. The Caucus worked tirelessly to expose and defeat numerous costly and invasive bills proposed by the majority party, ensuring greater transparency through public and media engagement.

Governor Moore's \$3 Billion Budget Deficit

The General Assembly's constitutional duty is to pass a balanced state budget. This session, Maryland faced a \$3 billion deficit for Fiscal Year 2026, worsened by a \$280 million revenue shortfall in March. Projections estimate a \$6 billion deficit by 2030. Despite inheriting a \$5 billion surplus, Governor Wes Moore and the Democratic supermajority have driven this fiscal crisis through unchecked spending and over 300 tax and fee increases in 2024 alone.

Rather than cutting spending, the majority proposed new taxes, including:

- Property Tax Rate Increases tied to rising assessments
- Estate Tax Threshold Reduction from \$5 million to \$2 million
- Business Service Taxes (e.g., 2.5% on accounting services)
- Data and Cloud Computing Tax (3% on websites and IT services)
- Income Tax Hikes, including a 6.5% bracket for high earners

These policies burden Maryland's middle class, small businesses, and retirees, pushing our state to 46th in tax competitiveness. Major employers, like McCormick & Company, warned of relocating due to these measures. On March 19, we rallied at the Maryland Tax Revolt in

Annapolis, successfully defeating the proposed Delivery Tax. However, the final \$66.9 billion FY 2026 budget—the largest in state history—included \$1.8 billion in tax and fee increases, such as:

- New Income Tax Brackets (6.25% and 6.5% for high earners)
- Capital Gains Surcharge (2% for incomes over \$350,000)
- Vehicle-Related Fees (e.g., doubled title fees, 6.5% excise tax)
- Sales Tax Expansions (e.g., 3% on data services, 6% on vending machine snacks)

Spending grew significantly, with \$10 billion for PreK-12 education (despite declining test scores), over \$15 billion for Medicaid (including coverage for non-residents and elective procedures), and hundreds of millions for green energy projects opposed by local communities. The budget was “balanced” with fund transfers and minimal cuts, such as deferring \$419.5 million to the Rainy Day Fund.

School Choice: Empowering Families

I reintroduced HB1180 – The Right to Learn Act, advocating for school choice as a civil rights issue. This bill would allow parents to transfer children from failing schools to better options and provide structured military boarding schools for students with behavioral challenges. Despite widespread support, including a Baltimore Sun article highlighting Baltimoreans’ backing, the Democratic supermajority blocked it. Meanwhile, HB161 – Comprehensive Health Education Framework passed, mandating state curriculum standards with no parental opt-out, prioritizing ideology over academic excellence.

The Maryland Freedom Caucus also defeated HB380, which sought to allow condom vending machines in schools, including elementary levels, after widespread parental outcry. These victories underscore our commitment to parental rights and quality education.

War on Mobility: Taxing the Middle Class

The majority’s tax hikes target Marylanders’ freedom of mobility, making car ownership costlier:

- Vehicle Sales Tax increased to 6.5%
- Doubled Title Fees and higher registration costs
- New Tire Fees (\$5 per tire) and increased recycling fees
- Short-Term Rental Vehicle Tax (3.5% excise)

These measures, alongside policies like biennial vehicle re-registration, burden working families and drive 53% of Marylanders to consider leaving, per recent surveys.

Skyrocketing Energy Costs

Governor Moore’s green energy policies—closing power plants and subsidizing wind and solar—have strained Maryland’s grid, causing utility bills to soar (19 cents/kWh vs. Virginia’s

13.5 cents/kWh). The EmPOWER surcharge and 2022 Climate Solutions Now Act force electrification, risking brownouts. The Maryland Freedom Caucus proposed a “Lower Electric Bills Now” agenda:

- Reopen power plants for reliable energy
- Eliminate EmPOWER fees
- Reform electrification mandates
- Redirect \$180 million from inefficient green programs

Despite these solutions, the majority introduced no bills to reduce energy costs, ignoring Marylanders’ financial strain.

United Methodist Church Trust Clause

For the second year, I introduced legislation to repeal the United Methodist Trust Clause, which the Baltimore-Washington Conference uses to demand payment from local churches seeking to disaffiliate. These community-built churches receive no Conference funding, yet face extortionate fees. Though the Senate version passed, both bills died in the House, a setback for religious freedom in Maryland, the birthplace of religious liberty.

Calvert County Priorities

The Calvert County Delegation advanced local interests:

- HB949: Authorizes tax agreements for data centers to boost economic growth
- HB998: Offers tax credits for preserving historic tobacco barns
- HB1540: Funds emergency services via tax agreements
- HB1401: Strengthens public safety by regulating disruptive gatherings

I want to share an important update about this year’s legislative session in Annapolis and how it impacts our community. Unlike previous years, when Calvert County’s bills passed smoothly, this session took a troubling turn, and I believe you deserve to know why.

First, the county’s decision to hire a lobbyist—at a cost of over \$120,000+ in taxpayer dollars – backfired. Rather than helping our local priorities, this move disrupted the legislative process, making it harder to advance bills that matter to Calvert County. I’m committed to ensuring your hard-earned tax dollars are spent wisely, and I’m concerned about the value this expense brings to our community.

Second, and even more concerning, the majority party’s leadership in Annapolis blocked several of our county’s bills—not because of their merit, but as political retaliation. Why? Because I, alongside the Maryland Freedom Caucus, stood firm against proposed tax hikes and excessive spending that severely burdens families and businesses across our state. Instead of debating these bills fairly, the leadership demanded silence and compliance from Republicans as a condition for moving our local legislation forward. This is unacceptable.

Calvert County deserves better. Our local priorities—whether improving schools, supporting small businesses, or keeping taxes affordable—should not be held hostage to partisan games. I will never stay silent or compromise our values just to appease Annapolis insiders. My commitment is to you, the residents of Calvert County, and to fighting for a Maryland that prioritizes economic stability and opportunity for all.

Thank you for your trust and support. Together, we can protect Calvert County's interests and build a stronger, more prosperous future. Please reach out to my office at mark.fisher@house.state.md.us with any questions or concerns—I'm here to serve you.

Fighting for You

Despite a challenging session, the Maryland Freedom Caucus secured victories by defeating harmful bills, from tax hikes on firearms to inappropriate school policies. We remain steadfast in opposing over-taxation, government overreach, and threats to your freedoms—whether it's your paycheck, parental rights, or energy affordability.

Thank you for entrusting me to serve you. The fight for transparency, liberty, and prosperity in Maryland continues, and with your support, we will keep pushing forward.

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Mark N. Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark N. Fisher, Chair
Calvert County Delegation