



Maryland General Assembly – 2026 Regular Session

GREATER OCEAN CITY MARYLAND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, INC.

END-OF-SESSION LEGISLATIVE REPORT

END OF SESSION LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY REPORT: The 449th Session of the Maryland General Assembly convened on **Wednesday, January 14th, 2026**, and adjourned “Sine Die” at midnight on **Monday, April 13th, 2026**. “Sine Die” is Latin for “the end”.

FINAL LEGISLATIVE ACTION. This End-of-Session Legislative Activity Report reflects the final disposition of legislative measures that potentially impacted **The Ocean City, Maryland Chamber of Commerce**, its membership, and its general business community.

On the 20th day after adjournment or not later than **Sunday, May 3rd, 2026**, the General Assembly must present bills enacted to the Governor.

On the 30th day after presentment of enacted legislation or not later than **Tuesday, June 2nd, 2026**, the Governor must sign or veto (including pocket vetoes) each measure or allow it to take effect without his signature. All bills signed into law by the Governor become effective on the specified date in the legislation. Public bill signings have not been scheduled as of this writing.

Accordingly, this End-of-Session report details only the legislation enacted by both Chambers of the Maryland General Assembly. **A subsequent FINAL ACTION PROFILE REPORT on appropriate measures signed into law by the Governor will be issued in early June 2025, containing the Chapter numbers and any vetoes.**



LOBBYISTS INTERACTIONS. One of the most crucial aspects of lobbying legislative members is securing face time with policymakers. The best form of communication with legislators is in-person interaction; however, it is just as important to be able to contact them via email, cell phone calls, and text messaging. A tremendous amount of time was expended during the Session lobbying legislative leadership, Committee Chairs, members, and staff of both the Senate and House on behalf of the OC Chamber.

2026 SESSION SCORECARD. During this Session, **3,473 separate legislative initiatives** were considered by the 188-member Legislature. There were **1,013** Senate bills and resolutions and **1,658** House bills and resolutions introduced, while **782** were cross-filed in both chambers. **165** bills were introduced in previous years. A total of **802** legislative bond initiatives were introduced. **884 bills passed both Chambers** and await the Governor’s signature/veto.

THE OCEAN CITY CHAMBER SCORECARD. In conjunction with the weekly conference calls coordinated by the OC Chamber Legislative Committee, The Rasmussen Group identified, monitored, and provided advocacy services regarding **155 legislative measures** that were generally identified to be of interest to the OC Chamber’s Legislative Committee; some were cross-filed. Of the **155** bills, **93** were introduced in the House; **62** in the Senate. The Chamber offered either written or oral testimony on **23** bills of interest, which includes many cross-files. The Executive Director offered **“Favorable” testimony on 4 bills, “Favorable with Amendments” on 5 bills,** and **14 bills with “Unfavorable” testimony.**

NEXT REGULAR SESSION: Notwithstanding a call for an interim Special Session, the General Assembly’s 90-day Session will reconvene next year in Regular Session on **Wednesday, January 13, 2027,** and Sine Die on **Monday, April 12, 2027.**



LEGISLATIVE ISSUES OF PRIORITY INTEREST TO THE GREATER OCEAN CITY CHAMBER

The 2026 Session was particularly successful and productive for the Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce in its support of legislation of benefit to the business community and in its efforts to defeat the passage of legislation opposed by the Chamber. The OC Chamber Legislative Committee, chaired by **Mr. Bob Thompson** and the Executive Director, **Amy Thompson**, in conjunction with the OC Chamber lobbyist **Dennis F. Rasmussen** and his firm, was able to work with each of the appropriate legislative committees in the House and Senate in successfully advocating the Chamber's positions regarding all legislation of interest.

Individually, the House bills were referred primarily to the Ways & Means Committee and a few to the Judiciary, Economic Matters, and Appropriations Committees. The Senate bills were primarily referred to the Finance Committee, Education, Energy & Environment Committee, with others to the Budget & Taxation and Judicial Proceedings Committees.

Bills covering a wide range of topics were all debated in some form during the 2026 Regular Session. The principal issue before the MGA this year was to close a \$1.4B structural budgetary gap. While the Governor submitted a balanced budget to the Assembly, the Senate, with concurrence of the House, made significant budget adjustments, maintaining the balanced budget within Spending Affordability limits.

Additionally, many other significant policy matters were considered, including but not limited to energy, gas & electric bill rebates, economic development, affordable housing, rounding cash transactions, unemployment insurance modernization, minimum wages, condominiums & HOAs, horse racing grants, professional licensing, charitable organizations, juvenile justice, criminal justice, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, etc.

Additionally, the Chamber tracked and took positions on various policy measures, such as the State FY 2027 tourism budget, climate solutions, flood risk disclosure, residential foreclosures, Economic Competitiveness Act, Worcester County Board of License Commissioners, building energy performance standards repeal, PFAS product phase outs & registrations, food service facilities & minimum wage, elevator inspections, internet gaming, floodplain restoration, alcoholic beverages, and short-term rentals.



CHAMBER'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES & RESULTS

Generally, the Chamber's Legislative Committee focused on its legislative priorities for the 2026 Session as follows:

- **INCREASE STATE TOURISM BUDGET:** Recommended in testimony against grant cuts; tourism grant was flat-funded.
- **OPPOSE OFFSHORE WIND:** No legislation introduced.
- **OPPOSE ELIMINATION OF TIPPED CREDIT/MINIMUM WAGE:** HB229/SB0886 were opposed in written testimony and killed.
- **WORKFORCE/LABOR SHORTAGE:** Several bills on OT pay, MD Worker Freedom Act – all monitored, testimony offered, and bills killed.
- **TRANSPORTATION:** SB0282 monitored TTF distribution for Worcester Co. – Sought to restore HUR to historic levels. Worcester/Municipalities are at \$4.1M.
- **MONITORING:**
 - **KIRWAN'S BLUEPRINT:** SB00282: Full incremental budget funding for the LEAs (Boards of Ed) – Major incremental funding delayed.
 - **iGAMING:** Multiple bills – offered written testimony and all killed.
 - **TAXES ON SERVICES:** SB0600 Retail Sales definition – died in Senate.
 - **HEALTH/HEALTHCARE:** HB0105 restaurants – Failed & HB0272 restrooms & food service passed.
 - **CONDO/HOA REFORMS:** Multiple bills. Some passed, most failed. Thoroughly monitored and testimony offered.
 - **CLIMATE CHANGE:** HB1219/SB0739 monitored. Passed with an interim study. HB0079 Climate Solutions Act offered UNF testimony – bill failed.



CHAMBER'S SELECTED PRIORITY LEGISLATION

What follows is a brief overview of several priority legislative issues impacting the Greater Ocean City Chamber's businesses, the position taken by the Legislative Committee, and their status at Session's end.

HB1101/SB0846 – WORCESTER COUNTY – ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES – TEMPORARY TO-GO EVENT PERMIT AND CLASS C PER DIEM MUNICIPAL TO-GO BEER, WINE, AND LIQUOR LICENSE.

These bills establish, in Worcester County, a Class C per diem municipal to-go beer, wine, and liquor (BWL) license and a related temporary to-go event permit.

They authorize the Worcester County Board of License Commissioners to issue the license to Pocomoke City, the Town of Berlin, and the Town of Snow Hill, and authorize the license holder to allow beer, wine, and liquor sold by the holder of a temporary to-go event permit to enter a designated special event area described in the license for a period not exceeding seven consecutive days, as specified. They also authorize the board to issue a to-go event permit to the holder of Class B and Class D alcoholic beverages licenses located within or immediately adjacent to a special event area identified in and for use in conjunction with a Class C per diem municipal to-go BWL license. The board must establish regulations for the license and permit, as specified. The fee for the Class C per diem municipal to-go BWL license is \$45 per day, and the fee for the temporary to-go event permit is \$20 per day. The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

OC Chamber Position: MONITOR

STATUS: Both bills were RETURNED PASSED and are pending the Governor's signature/veto.

HB0988 – ENVIRONMENT – BUILDING ENERGY PERFORMANCE STANDARDS – REPEAL:

This bill repeals provisions adopted under the Climate Solutions Now Act (CSNA) (Chapter 38 of 2022) that require the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to develop building energy performance standards (BEPS) for covered buildings in the State that achieve (1) a 20% reduction in net direct greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by January 1, 2030, as compared with 2025 levels for average buildings of similar construction and (2) net-zero direct GHG emissions by January 1, 2040. The bill repeals all related provisions under Title 2,

Subtitle 16 of the Environment Article, including requirements for MDE to certify a county BEPS program under specified circumstances; it also makes confirming changes under the Housing and Community Development Article.



OC Chamber Position: FAVORABLE WITH WRITTEN TESTIMONY.

STATUS: HB0988 had a public hearing in the E&T Committee on Feb. 27th and FAILED to advance.

SB0282/HB0390 – BUDGET BILL (FY 2027): Making the proposed appropriations contained in the State Budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, in accordance with Article III, Section 52 of the Maryland Constitution. The Chamber recommended full funding of the tourism grants in the MD Department of Commerce.

OC Chamber Position: FAVORABLE WITH WRITTEN TESTIMONY.

STATUS: SB0282 was PASSED ENROLLED, and the Governor signed it into law as Chapter 4, 2026 Laws of Maryland. Tourism grants were fully funded.

HB0914/SB0681 – WORCESTER COUNTY – BOARD OF LICENSE COMMISSIONERS – MEMBERSHIP: These bills increase, from three to five, the number of members that the Governor must appoint to the Worcester County Board of License Commissioners. The terms of the members are staggered as required by the terms provided for board members on June 1, 2026. The bill takes effect June 1, 2026.

OC Chamber Position: FAVORABLE WITH WRITTEN TESTIMONY.

STATUS: Both bills were RETURNED PASSED and sent to the Governor for signature or veto.

HB0200 – SALE OF RESIDENTIAL REAL PROPERTY – REQUIRED FLOOD RISK DISCLOSURE: This bill requires, subject to specified exceptions and beginning July 1, 2027, a seller of real property to provide specified flood-risk information to a purchaser before the parties enter into a contract. This requirement only applies to residential real property improved by four or fewer single-family units. By June 1, 2027, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) must develop and publish a real property flood risk disclosure statement form for use in connection with the bill's requirements.

OC Chamber Position: MONITOR

STATUS: HB0200 was RETURNED PASSED and sent to the Governor for signature or veto.

HB1022/SB0686 – PFAS CHEMICALS – PRODUCT PHASE OUTS AND REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS: These bills expand product bans for specified consumer products that contain intentionally added PFAS chemicals; the bans are phased in by product type, with the first bans taking effect January 1, 2028. They also require manufacturers to register their products that contain intentionally added PFAS chemicals with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) by January 1, 2028 (and pay a related registration fee). They also establish related compliance, enforcement, and penalty provisions.



GREATER OCEAN CITY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Maryland General Assembly – 2026 Regular Session
END-OF-SESSION LEGISLATIVE REPORT



Penalties from new and specified existing penalty provisions, as well as manufacturer registration fees, are paid into a newly established Maryland PFAS Chemicals Protection and Remediation Fund (PFAS Fund). The PFAS Fund is used to assess, prevent, and remediate PFAS chemical contamination by, among other things, providing grants and loans to public and private entities for related projects.

OC Chamber Position: UNFAVORABLE WITH WRITTEN TESTIMONY.

STATUS: HB1022 was WITHDRAWN by the sponsor after a public hearing in the House E&T Committee on April 8th.

SB0686 FAILED in the Senate EEE Committee after a public hearing on Feb. 24th.

HB1229/SB0886 – CONSUMER PROTECTION AND LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT – FOOD SERVICE FACILITIES AND MINIMUM WAGE:

This proposed constitutional amendment, if approved by the voters at the next general election, establishes that every person employed in the State has a right to be paid the State minimum wage rate without regard to tips received. Contingent on the enactment of the constitutional amendment, the bill phases in an increase in the State minimum wage to \$25.00 per hour by January 1, 2030, and indexes it to inflation beginning January 1, 2033, along with establishing minimum wage rates for small employers. The bill phases out the tip credit for tipped employees so that, beginning January 1, 2031, an employer must directly pay a tipped employee at least the State minimum wage. The bill repeals the Secure Maryland Wage Act and all general exemptions from the Maryland Wage and Hour Law. Additionally, a food service facility may not charge a service fee unless it is prominently disclosed to the customer and distributed to employees, as specified.

OC Chamber Position: UNFAVORABLE WITH WRITTEN TESTIMONY.

STATUS: HB1229 FAILED after a public hearing in the House GLE Committee on Feb. 26th.

SB0886 also FAILED in the Senate Finance Committee after a public hearing on March 11th.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS OF MAJOR LEGISLATIVE ENACTMENTS

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT – GOVERNOR

SB0282 – BUDGET BILL – (FISCAL YEAR 2027) THE SPEAKER (BY REQUEST - ADMINISTRATION). Maryland’s 449th legislative session unfolded under significant fiscal pressure. Lawmakers closed the fiscal 2027 gap, preserved reserves, and fully funded principal commitments, such as the Blueprint, but did not resolve the larger structural deficits projected for the years ahead. That budget pressure shaped debates across nearly every policy area, from taxes and public safety to housing, elections, education, procurement, and economic development.

SB0282 provides approximately **\$70.8 billion** in appropriations for fiscal 2027 – an increase of **\$341.0 million (0.1%)** compared to fiscal 2026. General funds constitute the largest portion of the State budget, accounting for **38% of the total fiscal 2027 legislative appropriation, or \$27.4 billion**. Special fund appropriations total **15.0%** of the fiscal 2027 appropriation (**\$10.5 billion**). Federal funds continue to account for approximately **30%** of all spending (**\$21.2 billion**). Higher education funding is **\$6.1 billion (9%)**, and transportation funding is **\$5.4 billion (8%)**.

An Unappropriated General Fund Balance at year’s end is \$108.0M.

STATUS: SB0282 PASSED ENROLLED WITH AMENDMENTS. SIGNED INTO LAW ON 4/8/2026 BY THE GOVERNOR AS CHAPTER 4, 2026 LAWS OF MARYLAND.

HB0390 (Cross-file) did not advance from the House Appropriations Committee since the Senate was designated to drive the 2026 Session appropriation measures (rotates annually from House to Senate).



SB0283 – CAPITAL BUDGET – FISCAL YEAR 2027 – THE SPEAKER (BY REQUEST – ADMINISTRATION).

The General Assembly passed a Fiscal Year 2027 new debt capital program totaling **\$1.692B** (within the recommended limits of the Capital Debt Affordability Committee) in GO Bonds and **\$56.4M** in General Funds. Special Fund appropriations totaled **\$524.6M**, Federal Fund appropriations totaled **\$223.5M**, with Revenue Bonds totaling **\$332.2M**. The Capital Budget total is: **\$2.828B**.

The larger areas of the GO capital program commitment include:

- **IAC-School Construction: \$444.4M**
- **Miscellaneous/Grants: \$331.5M**
- **DHCD: \$252.75M**
- **University System of MD: \$240.6M**
- **MDOT: \$198.5M**
- **Morgan University: \$95.236M**
- **Board of Public Works: \$81.8M**
- **DPSCS: \$67.5M**
- **MD Higher Ed Comm: \$63.240M**
- **University Med System: \$52.250M**

The larger areas of Federal fund capital program commitment include:

- **MDE: \$174.645M**
- **DHCD: \$42.154M**
- **DNR: \$6.5M**

STATUS: SB0283 PASSED ENROLLED WITH AMENDMENTS, taking effect on June 1, 2026. SIGNED INTO LAW ON 4/8/2026 BY THE GOVERNOR AS CHAPTER 5, LAWS OF MARYLAND.

HB0391 (Cross-file) did not advance from the House Appropriations Committee since the Senate was designated to drive the 2026 Session appropriation measures (rotates annually from House to Senate).



SB0283 – CAPITAL BUDGET – FISCAL YEAR 2027

WORCESTER COUNTY CAPITAL PROJECTS

Legend: A=Acquisition P=Planning C=Construction E=Equipment

- **Berlin Lead Service Line Replacement Phase I (C) \$542,253**
- **Pocomoke City Cured In Place Pipelining Market Street Mains Phase II (PC) \$2,524,120**
- **Pocomoke City Lead Service Line Inventory (P) \$100,000**
- **Pocomoke City Market Street Water Main Relining Phase I (C) \$777,000**
- **Snow Hill Lead Service Line Inventory (P) \$168,546**
- **Snow Hill Inflow and Infiltration Improvements Phase I (C) \$790,070**
- **Three Lower Counties Community Services, Inc. - Behavioral Health Care Facility Acquisition (A) \$980,000**
- **Buckingham Elementary School Replacement (P) \$1,867,000**
- **Pocomoke Elementary School - Roof Replacement (C) \$883,000**
- **New Pocomoke Library (E) \$242,000**
- **Ocean City - Northside Park Playground Phase II Improvements (C) \$267,140**
- **Snow Hill - Sturgis Park New Restrooms (C) \$298,215**
- **Assateague State Park - Boating Facility and Comfort Station Improvements (C) \$500,000**
- **Worcester George Island Landing - Boating Facility Improvements (C) \$250,000**
- **Shad Landing Marina Improvements (C) \$1,000,000**
- **County Fire Training Tower (APCE) \$250,000**
- **County Humane Society (APCE) \$20,000**
- **Atlantic General Hospital Corp. - Central Sterile Processing Department Renovation (CE) \$79,000**



SB0284 – BUDGET RECONCILIATION AND FINANCING ACT (BRFA) OF 2026 – THE SPEAKER (BY REQUEST – ADMINISTRATION).

This Administration bill executes actions to provide mandate relief, increase revenues, contain costs, swap or fund transfers, use special funds in place of general funds, and reduce future year general fund expenditures, in addition to other actions. The net effect on State revenues and expenditures in **FY 2026 is \$475.8M and in FY 2027 is \$305.3M.** The bill also makes changes to the current statutory law regarding mandates. The BRFA also provides a significant impact on local government grants (Cade CC formula (-\$22 million), disparity grants, scholarships, etc.) and continues to impose increased cost sharing for teachers' retirement) and has a meaningful impact on small businesses.

STATUS: SB0284 PASSED ENROLLED with AMENDMENTS, taking effect on June 1, 2026. IT WAS SIGNED INTO LAW ON 4/8/2026 BY THE GOVERNOR AS CHAPTER 6, 2026 LAWS OF MARYLAND.

HB0392 (Cross-file) did not advance from the House Appropriations Committee since the Senate was designated to drive the 2026 Session appropriation measures (rotates annually from House to Senate).



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS OF MAJOR LEGISLATIVE ENACTMENTS

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND

Here is a list of how the lawmakers addressed other significant policy issues during the 2026 Session.

- **ELECTION DISTRICTS – GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND REPRESENTATIVES IN CONGRESS (HB0488)**: This emergency bill alters the boundaries of the State’s eight congressional districts for the 2026 election of members of the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill also proposes a constitutional amendment to (1) establish that specified provisions of the State Constitution regarding legislative districts apply explicitly for the election of a member of the Senate and members of the House of Delegates and (2) establish that the General Assembly has the power to grant original jurisdiction to the Supreme Court of Maryland to review the congressional districting of the State. The bill also proposes a temporary constitutional amendment to establish the boundaries of the eight congressional districts for the State proposed by the bill in the State constitution for statewide elections that occur between 2026 and the effective date of legislation establishing districts for the election of the State’s representatives in Congress following the 2030 decennial census.
STATUS: PASSED the House (99-37) but FAILED in the Senate Rules Committee. The Senate President prevailed in his insistence that redistricting was a bad idea and held onto the Senate democratic caucus against the Governor’s and House of Delegate’s pro-redistricting efforts.
- **HOUSE OF DELEGATES**: The newly elected House Speaker reorganized Committees and elevated a significant number of Delegates to leadership positions beginning with the 2026 Session. She restructured and renamed the Health & Government Operations (HGO) Committee into the Government, Labor and Elections Committee.
- **IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT 287(g) AGREEMENTS (SB0245/HB0444)**: These emergency bills prohibit the State, a unit of local government, a county sheriff, or any agency, officer, employee, or agent of the State or a unit of local government from entering into an “immigration enforcement agreement.” Immediately upon enactment of the bill, the State, a unit of local government, a county sheriff, or any agency, officer, employee, or agent of the State, or a unit of local government with an existing immigration enforcement agreement, must exercise the agreement’s termination provision.



STATUS: Both bills were ENACTED and signed into law on 2/17/2026 by the Governor as CHAPTERS 0001 and 0002, respectively, 2026 Laws of Maryland.

- **IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT – PROHIBITIONS – 287(g) AGREEMENTS (COMMUNITY TRUST ACT) (SB0791/HB1575):** This bill prohibits, with specified exceptions, a local correctional facility from taking specified actions relating to immigration enforcement. In addition, without application to the Baltimore City Detention Center (BCDC) and the centralized booking facility in Baltimore City operated by the Division of Pretrial Detention and Services (DPDS) in the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), the bill requires a State correctional facility to provide written notice to federal immigration authorities of the release of an individual who is the subject of an active immigration detainer within 48 hours before the release of the individual. The bill authorizes (1) the Attorney General or an individual who has been subjected to a violation of the bill’s provisions to bring a civil action to enforce the bill’s provisions and (2) the court to issue temporary, preliminary, or permanent injunctive relief to prevent an act that would constitute a violation of the bill’s provisions. Further, the bill prohibits, with specified exceptions, a law enforcement agent, during the performance of regular police functions, from providing federal immigration authorities with information about an individual obtained in the course of the law enforcement agent’s duties unless required by a valid court order. Finally, the bill authorizes a District Court commissioner or a judge, determining whether to grant pretrial release or set bond or bail for a defendant charged with a felony, to consider the existence of an immigration detainer.

STATUS: SB0791 ENACTED by both Chambers and waiting for the Governor’s signature/veto. Cross file HB1575 FAILED in the House after a public hearing.

- **SHORT-TERM RENTAL UNITS – SAFETY (JILLIAN AND LINDSAY WIENER SHORT-TERM RENTAL SAFETY ACT) (HB1221/SB0624)** – These bills require the inclusion of specified fire prevention and detection equipment in all short-term rental units offered for short-term rental for less than 30 consecutive days. By July 1, 2028, each county and Baltimore City in which short-term rentals are allowed must, by local law or regulation, require the annual inspection of all short-term rental units in the jurisdiction for compliance, as specified. By October 1, 2028, the State Fire Marshal must report to the General Assembly on the information reported to the State Fire Marshal by the counties and Baltimore City in accordance with the bill. The bill may not be construed to (1) require a county or Baltimore City to authorize the use of short-term rentals in the jurisdiction or (2) preempt or prohibit a county or Baltimore City from enacting other measures regarding short-term rentals in the jurisdiction in addition to the measures required by the bill.



STATUS: ENACTED and signed into law on 4/14/2026 by the Governor as CHAPTERS 0009 and 0010, respectively, 2026 Laws of Maryland.

- **RESIDENTIAL RENTAL APARTMENTS – AIR-CONDITIONING REQUIREMENT (SB0012/HB0153):** These bills require a landlord of residential rental units in apartment buildings with 10 or more individual dwelling units to provide air conditioning, from June 1 through September 30 each year, as specified. Unless otherwise exempted by the bill, landlords are to provide air conditioning in residential rental units (1) beginning June 1, 2026, for newly constructed units and (2) beginning October 1, 2026, for existing units that undergo renovation that includes the replacement or substantial upgrade of electrical systems or heating systems. The bill applies prospectively only and does not have any effect on or application to any building construction or renovation for which the building permit is issued before the bill’s effective date. The bill takes effect June 1, 2026.

STATUS: SB0012 & HB0153 PASSED ENROLLED by both Chambers and waiting the Governor’s signature/veto.

- **GUARDIANSHIP ASSISTANCE PROGRAM & STATE FOSTER YOUTH OMBUDSMAN (KANAIYAH’S LAW) (SB0996/HB0980):** These bills require the Department of Human Services (DHS) to establish and maintain a Guardianship Assistance Program to promote the placement and maintenance of children in permanent guardianship homes by providing guardianship assistance to guardians of minor children. The bill establishes eligibility and termination requirements for the program, as specified, and requires DHS to adopt implementing regulations. “Guardianship assistance” means monetary and medical assistance provided under the program. The bill also establishes the State Foster Youth Ombudsman within DHS to, among other responsibilities, provide legal expertise in the areas of child welfare, custody and guardianship matters, and appeals and due process issues. The bill takes effect October 1, 2027.

STATUS: HB0980 ENACTED and waiting the Governor’s signature/ veto. Cross file SB0996 PASSED the Senate but FAILED in the House at end of Session.

- **UTILITY RELIEF (REDUCING ENERGY LOAD INFLATION FOR EVERYDAY FAMILIES) ACT (HB1532):** This emergency bill takes several actions related to State- and ratepayer-funded energy programs, utility rates and cost recovery, competitive electricity supply, and local solar permitting. The bill also (1) establishes consumer transparency requirements for utilities; (2) establishes expectations and registry requirements for data centers; and (3) makes administrative changes. Specified provisions take effect July 1, 2026.

STATUS: PASSED ENROLLED and awaiting the Governor’s signature.



- **IMMUNIZATIONS, SCREENINGS, AND FOR PREVENTIVE SERVICES – PHARMACIST ADMINISTRATION AND REQUIRED HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE (THE VAX ACT) (HB0637/SB0385)**: These Administration bills require the Secretary of Health to issue, publish, and distribute specified recommendations for immunizations, screenings, and preventive services. A pharmacist may administer a vaccination recommended by the Secretary to an individual who is at least seven years old. The bill also alters health insurance coverage requirements for certain immunizations, screenings, and preventive services. Obsolete language regarding the pertussis vaccine is also repealed. The bill takes effect July 1, 2026, and applies to all policies, contracts, and health benefit plans issued, delivered, or renewed in the State on or after January 1, 2027.
STATUS: ENACTED and signed into law on 4/14/2026 by the Governor as CHAPTERS 0007 and 0008, respectively, 2026 Laws of Maryland.
- **FOOD RETAILERS AND THIRD-PARTY DELIVERY SERVICE PROVIDERS – DYNAMIC PRICING AND PERSONAL DATA (PROTECTION FROM PREDATORY PRICING ACT) (HB0895/SB0387)**: These Administration bills prohibit a “food retailer” or a “third-party food delivery service provider” from engaging in the practice of “dynamic pricing” or using personal data to set a price for consumer goods or services for a single consumer or a group of consumers. These entities may not use protected class data to offer, advertise, or sell a consumer good or service to a consumer for whom the protected class data pertains if the use of such data has the effect of withholding or denying from the consumer an accommodation, an advantage, or a privilege provided to others. These bills also generally prohibit other types of merchants from setting the price of consumer goods or services using dynamic pricing or personal data unless a required disclosure is made. Violation of these provisions is an unfair, abusive, or deceptive trade practice under the Maryland Consumer Protection Act (MCPA), subject to MCPA’s civil penalty provisions, except provisions that allow a private right of action.
STATUS: HB0895 ENACTED and waiting the Governor’s signature/veto. Cross file SB0387 PASSED the Senate but FAILED in the House ECM Committee after a public hearing.
- **JURISDICTION, DETENTION, AND CONFINEMENT (YOUTH CHARGING REFORM ACT) (SB0323/HB0409)**: These bills (1) expand the jurisdiction of the juvenile court by repealing statutory exceptions to the juvenile court’s exclusive original jurisdiction; (2) require detention of a child before a hearing in specified situations; (3) limit the circumstances under which a child may be held, detained, or confined in an adult jail or correctional facility and prohibits detaining or confining a child in any institution in which the child has contact with or comes within sight or sound of an incarcerated adult, as specified; and (4) impose several reporting requirements. The bill applies only



prospectively and does not apply to any criminal prosecution or delinquency proceeding for any act committed before the bill's October 1, 2026, effective date. The bill generally takes effect October 1, 2026; specified provisions related to juvenile confinement take effect October 1, 2029.

STATUS: SB0323 ENACTED and waiting the Governor's signature/veto.
Cross file HB0409 FAILED in the House Judiciary Committee after a public hearing.

- **VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 2026 – COUNTIES AND MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS (SB0255/HB0350):** These emergency bills (1) establishes a specified prohibition against the impairment of the ability of members of a protected class (members of a race, color, or language minority group or a class or two or more of those groups) to elect candidates of their choice in elections in a county or municipality, or to influence the outcome of such elections; (2) authorizes the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) or any other person to bring an action to enforce the prohibition in the county or municipality where the alleged violation occurred; (3) gives the court specified authority to order remedies and grant preliminary relief; and (4) includes factors, considerations, and criteria related to the establishment of a violation of the prohibition and determination of an appropriate remedy. The bill does not apply to statewide elections.

STATUS: SB0255 ENACTED and waiting the Governor's signature/veto.
Cross file HB0350 FAILED in the House GLE Committee after a public hearing.

- **LAND USE – COMPREHENSIVE AND GENERAL PLANS - ALTERATION OF ELEMENTS (SB0197/HB0243):** These departmental bills modify and reorganize the elements that a local jurisdiction must include in a comprehensive (or general) plan so that the elements (1) are consistent with planning principles established under Chapters 63 and 64 of 2025 (see Current Law) and (2) apply consistently across all local jurisdictions. These bills also add and/or modify certain guidance and requirements applicable to the plans as a whole and to specific elements. These bills apply prospectively to a county or municipality that begins the process of amending, revising, readopting, or modifying a comprehensive plan on or after the bill's effective date.

STATUS: Both bills were ENACTED and signed into law on 4/14/2026 by the Governor as CHAPTERS 0110 and 0111, respectively, 2026 Laws of Maryland.



SPECIAL THANKS

As always, it has been a pleasure to provide advocacy service to the membership of the Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce during this year's legislative session and we look forward to continuing to represent the best interests of the Chamber in its effort to improve the business environment in Greater Ocean City as well as improve the quality of life experienced by the many Marylanders that call Ocean City their second home.

Should you have questions or require clarification, please feel free to contact us:

GREATER OCEAN CITY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, INC.

ROBERT (BOB) A. THOMPSON, JR.

Legislative Committee Chair

Tier 1 Construction

E-Mail: Bob@1built.com

Office: 443-373-2977

AMY THOMPSON

Executive Director

E-Mail: amy@oceancity.org

Office: 410-213-0144, Ext. 102

THE RASMUSSEN GROUP, LLC

DENNIS F. RASMUSSEN

Advocate for The Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce, Inc.

E-Mail: df@rasmussengrp.net

Office: 410-303-4658

DENNIS H. PARKINSON

Senior Associate & Advocate

E-Mail: dhp@rasmussengrp.net

Office: 443-994-4988