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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Dear Friend:

With the end of the 2015 Maryland General Assembly session, I am providing you with this brief overview of some of the important legislation we passed that you may find of interest. Thank you for contacting me during the session, and for the honor and privilege of serving and representing you in the Maryland State Senate.

**Budget and Protecting our Priorities:** The General Assembly worked diligently to pass a balanced budget that protects our investments in education, health care, public safety, and other longstanding priorities that will enable our economy to grow, while reducing the structural deficit and maintaining our AAA bond rating and Rainy Day Fund. In response to the new Governor's budget proposal that made significant cuts to public education, particularly the GCEI that has helped Montgomery County; health care for pregnant, low income women and some of our most vulnerable citizens; services for the developmentally disabled; and other longstanding priorities, the General Assembly passed a budget that allows him to restore all those cuts. However, the Governor, who under our state Constitution holds the final decision as to whether to allocate the funds to those critical areas, has not yet expressed such a decision.

**Education:** Our investment in education enabled Maryland to rank number one nationwide for five years in a row. This year, we have invested over \$6.1 billion in K-12 education and \$280 million in school construction funding. We have also budgeted over \$5.53 billion for our public colleges and over \$437 million for higher education capital projects, including over \$54 million for our community colleges.

**Protecting our Environment:** The legislature passed bills, which I cosponsored, to place a two year **Moratorium on Fracking**, thereby allowing us time to further study and gather critical evidence on its impact on the environment and public health and safety; and to codify the **Maryland Commission on Climate Change**.

**Human Trafficking:** As lead Sponsor, I spearheaded efforts to pass a bill to create a **Safe Harbor Workgroup for Youth Victims of Human Trafficking** to identify and target vital assistance and resources to help youth victims break out of the cycle of human slavery and exploitation; and a bill to allow human trafficking victims to assert an **Affirmative Defense of Duress** in a prostitution charge to break out of a further downward spiral, and recover and rebuild their lives, get jobs, housing and other essentials.

**Domestic Violence:** As lead Sponsor in the Senate, I worked hard to pass a bill allowing a judge the flexibility to order "necessary relief" in a final protective order to better tailor relief, as each case of domestic violence is unique; and a bill to allow a Maryland victim to petition for a protective order for abuse occurring outside of our state.