



## Howard County Chamber of Commerce 2026RS End of Session Report

### Priority Bills

#### **HB 45 (SB 417) - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Joe Vogel**

#### **Labor and Employment - Mandatory Meetings on Religious or Political Matters - Employee Attendance and Participation (Maryland Worker Freedom Act)**

This bill prohibits employers and their agents, representatives, and designees from taking or threatening to take specified adverse actions against an employee – or refusing to hire an applicant for employment – because the employee or applicant declines to attend, participate in, or listen to communications in an employer-sponsored meeting regarding the employer’s opinion on religious or political matters, as defined by the bill. The bill authorizes the Commissioner of Labor and Industry to enforce the bill, as specified. Additionally, the commissioner must develop and make available a poster and model notice by November 1, 2026.

#### **SB 417 (HB 45) - Oppose - Passed**

**Sen. Clarence Lam**

#### **Labor and Employment - Mandatory Meetings on Religious or Political Matters - Employee Attendance and Participation (Maryland Worker Freedom Act)**

This bill prohibits employers and their agents, representatives, and designees from taking or threatening to take specified adverse actions against an employee – or refusing to hire an applicant for employment – because the employee or applicant declines to attend, participate in, or listen to communications in an employer-sponsored meeting regarding the employer’s opinion on religious or political matters, as defined by the bill. The bill authorizes the Commissioner of Labor and Industry to enforce the bill, as specified. Additionally, the commissioner must develop and make available a poster and model notice by November 1, 2026.

#### **HB 69 - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Joe Vogel**

#### **Labor and Employment - Exemptions From Overtime Pay - Administrative, Executive, or Professional Capacity**

This bill alters an exemption for specified executive, administrative, or professional (EAP) employees from the Maryland Wage and Hour Law, resulting in more employees being eligible for overtime compensation. The bill changes the salary threshold above which EAP employees are exempt from the law’s overtime requirements from the threshold established under regulation (which refers to 29C.F.R. § 541.600) to the higher of: the amount established in 29 C.F.R. § 541.600 (currently \$684 per week) or \$769.23 per week (equivalent to a \$40,000 annual salary) beginning July 1,

2027. This amount gradually escalates each fiscal year until it reaches \$961.54 per week beginning July 1, 2031 (equivalent to a \$50,000 annual salary). The bill codifies the federal rules for duties required for an individual to be considered a bona fide EAP employee.

**HB 78 (SB 457) - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Vaughn Stewart**

**Property Taxes - Authority of Counties to Establish Subclasses and Set Separate Rates for Land and Improvements to Land**

This bill authorizes Baltimore City and county governments to establish, by law, separate subclasses of real property consisting of land and improvements to land and to set a separate real property tax rate for each. If Baltimore City or a county government establishes separate real property tax rates for land and improvements to land: (1) the tax rates for land and improvements to land do not have to be equal; and (2) each of the separate tax rates must apply uniformly throughout the taxing jurisdiction to all real property within the subclass to which the tax rate applies.

**SB 457 (HB 78) - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Jim Rosapepe**

**Property Taxes - Authority of Counties to Establish Subclasses and Set Separate Rates for Land and Improvements to Land**

This bill authorizes Baltimore City and county governments to establish, by law, separate subclasses of real property consisting of land and improvements to land and to set a separate real property tax rate for each. If Baltimore City or a county government establishes separate real property tax rates for land and improvements to land: (1) the tax rates for land and improvements to land do not have to be equal; and (2) each of the separate tax rates must apply uniformly throughout the taxing jurisdiction to all real property within the subclass to which the tax rate applies.

**HB 90 (SB 224) - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Kris Fair**

**Property Taxes - Authority of Counties to Establish a Subclass and Set a Special Rate for Commercial and Industrial Property**

This bill authorizes Baltimore City and county governments to establish, by law, a subclass of improved real property consisting of the following real property assessment codes: (1) commercial; (2) industrial; (3) commercial/industrial condominium; (4) residential/commercial; and (5) commercial/residential. Baltimore City and county governments are authorized to set a special property tax rate for these real property classifications. The bill mandates either a property tax exemption or property tax credit for residential portions of commercial or industrial property. The bill authorizes a local property tax credit for specified small businesses. The bill adds a reporting requirement for jurisdictions that enact a special property tax rate.

**SB 224 (HB 90) - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Karen Young**

**Property Taxes - Authority of Counties to Establish a Subclass and Set a Special Rate for Commercial and Industrial Property**

This bill authorizes Baltimore City and county governments to establish, by law, a subclass of improved real property consisting of the following real property assessment codes: (1) commercial; (2) industrial; (3) commercial/industrial condominium; (4) residential/commercial; and (5) commercial/residential. Baltimore City and county governments are authorized to set a special property tax rate for these real property classifications. The bill mandates either a property tax exemption or property tax credit for residential portions of commercial or industrial property. The bill authorizes a local property tax credit for specified small businesses. The bill adds a reporting requirement for jurisdictions that enact a special property tax rate.

**HB 148 - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Joe Vogel**

**Consumer Protection and Labor and Employment - Surveillance-Based Price and Wage Setting - Prohibition**

This bill prohibits surveillance-based price setting and specifies that the practice is considered an unfair, abusive, or deceptive trade practice and constitutes a violation of the Maryland Consumer Protection Act (MCPA). The bill also prohibits surveillance-based wage setting, except under limited circumstances, and authorizes the Commissioner of Labor and Industry in the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) to investigate and take specified actions after receiving a written complaint about the practice from an employee.

**HB 188 (SB 3) - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Lorig Charkoudian**

**Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act of 2026**

This bill generally expands the State's unemployment insurance (UI) program by increasing both employee benefits and employer UI taxes and indexing certain major components to wages.

**SB 3 (HB 188) - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Benjamin Kramer**

**Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act of 2026**

This bill generally expands the State's unemployment insurance (UI) program by increasing both employee benefits and employer UI taxes and indexing certain major components to wages.

**HB 203 - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Joe Vogel**

**Labor and Employment - Training Repayment Agreements - Prohibition**

This bill prohibits an employer from requiring, as a condition of employment, employees or prospective employees to enter into a training repayment agreement. An agreement that constitutes a training repayment is null and void as being against the public policy of the State. The Commissioner of Labor and Industry may investigate violations upon receipt of a written complaint by an employee. If an employer knowingly violates the provisions, the Commissioner must assess a civil penalty of up to \$10,000 for a first violation and \$20,000 for subsequent violations. An individual may also

bring a civil action for economic damages and, if successful, is entitled to restitution and potentially an additional award up to three times the amount of the restitution.

**HB 314 - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Vaughn Stewart**

**Automation Technology Deployment Assessment and Displaced Employee Retraining Fund - Established**

This bill requires each covered employer to submit an annual report to the Secretary of Labor that includes the number of displaced employees if the employer has reduced its workforce by at least 10 employees while deploying automation technology that contributed to the reduction. The bill establishes the Displaced Employee Retraining Fund (DERF) to support training, job placement, and service programs, and requires each covered employer to pay an assessment of \$900 to the fund for each displaced employee, unless the employer provides severance pay, certified retraining, or reemployment opportunities. The Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) must enforce the bill, including assessing penalties for noncompliance.

**HB 317 - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Vaughn Stewart**

**Recipients of Economic Development Assistance or State Contracts - Certification of Compliance With State Labor Laws**

This bill requires specified State contractors and recipients of State economic assistance to certify annually, by July 1, that they are in compliance with specified State labor laws. Failure to submit the required certification, or to comply with adverse determinations or final judgments related to State labor laws, can result in the suspension of payments to the contractor or recipient.

**HB 476 (SB 474) - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Natalie Ziegler**

**Civil Actions - Noneconomic Damages - Personal Injury and Wrongful Death**

This bill repeals the limitations (caps) on noneconomic damages in civil actions for personal injury or wrongful death and related provisions. The bill does not alter the caps on damages in medical malpractice cases, which are addressed in a different statute. The bill applies prospectively and may not be applied or interpreted to have any effect on or application to any cause of action arising before October 1, 2026.

**SB 474 (HB 476) - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Jeff Waldstreicher**

**Civil Actions - Noneconomic Damages - Personal Injury and Wrongful Death**

This bill repeals the limitations (caps) on noneconomic damages in civil actions for personal injury or wrongful death and related provisions. The bill does not alter the caps on damages in medical malpractice cases, which are addressed in a different statute. The bill applies prospectively and may not be applied or interpreted to have any effect on or application to any cause of action arising before October 1, 2026.

**HB 536 - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Stephanie Smith**

**Employment Discrimination - Reasonable Accommodations - Disabilities Due to Childbirth, Menopause, and Related Medical Conditions**

This bill expands certain protections against employment discrimination based on an individual's disability to include those temporary disabilities caused or contributed to by childbirth, menopause, or a "related medical condition". The bill generally incorporates childbirth, menopause, or related medical condition into statutory provisions that govern reasonable accommodations that are required based on disabilities caused or contributed to by pregnancy. The bill authorizes an employer to consider the operational impact of any staffing gap created by an employee's transfer request to a less strenuous or hazardous position for the duration of the disability, including the availability of other personnel to perform the duties of the transferred employee and the cost and feasibility of temporary coverage. "Related medical condition" includes (1) lactation or the need to express breast milk for a nursing child and (2) the need to manage the effects of vasomotor symptoms related to menopause.

**HB 690 - Support - Did not Pass**

**Del. Wayne Hartman**

**Corporate Income Tax - Rate Reduction (Economic Competitiveness Act of 2026)**

This bill reduces the corporate income tax rate from 8.25% to 6.25% by tax year 2030. The change is phased in over four tax years – 7.75% for tax year 2027; 7.25% for tax year 2028; and 6.75% for tax year 2029.

**HB 724 - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Lesley Lopez**

**Employment Discrimination - Caregiver Status**

This bill prohibits an employer from discriminating against an individual because of the individual's caregiver status. "Caregiver status" means the status of being an individual who provides direct and ongoing care for a minor child or an individual with a disability who (1) relies on the caregiver for medical care or to meet the needs of daily life and (2) is in a familial relationship with the caregiver, as specified, or resides in the caregiver's household.

**HB 796 - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Jen Terrasa**

**Recycling - Prohibition on the Chemical Conversion of Plastic**

This bill excludes the following chemical conversion processes from the definition of "recycling" under Title 9, Subtitle 17 of the Environment Article (Office of Recycling): pyrolysis, hydrolysis, methanolysis, gasification, or enzymatic breakdown; the term also does not include any similar chemical conversion processes, as determined by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). The bill also prohibits a person from building a facility in the State that converts plastic to fuel or feedstock through those same chemical conversion processes. MDE is authorized to adopt implementing regulations.

**HB 801 - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Elizabeth Embry**

**Income Tax - Addition Modifications - Business Stock Gains, Fines, Penalties, and Bonus Depreciation**

This bill repeals the exemption for qualified manufacturers from the income tax decoupling modifications relating to the § 168(k) bonus depreciation allowance and enhancements to the § 179 expensing allowance. The bill also requires addition modifications for (1) any qualified small business stock (QSBS) gain excluded from income under § 1202 of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) and (2) any amount in excess of \$50,000 paid or incurred during the tax year for restitution that is deducted as a trade or business expense under IRC § 162.

**HB 840 (SB 767) - Support - Did not Pass**

**Del. Mark Edelson**

**Property Tax - Credit for Commercial Buildings Rented to Small Businesses**

This bill authorizes county and municipal governments to grant, by law, a property tax credit for a commercial building that is rented or rented to own, to a small business located in a specified arts and entertainment district or a main street designated community. Local governments may provide, by law, for: (1) the amount and duration of the tax credit; (2) additional eligibility criteria for the tax credit; (3) application procedures for the tax credit; and (4) any other provision necessary to carry out the tax credit. The bill takes effect June 1, 2026, and applies to taxable years beginning after June 30, 2026.

**SB 767 (HB 840) - Monitor - Passed**

**Sen. Bill Ferguson**

**Property Tax - Credit for Commercial Buildings Rented to Small Businesses**

This bill authorizes county and municipal governments to grant, by law, a property tax credit for a commercial building that is rented or rented to own, to a small business located in (1) a specified arts and entertainment district; (2) a Main Street Maryland designated community; (3) a Baltimore City designated main street; or (4) any other designated business improvement district in the State. Local governments may provide, by law, for: (1) the amount and duration of the tax credit; (2) additional eligibility criteria for the tax credit; (3) application procedures for the tax credit; and (4) any other provision necessary to carry out the tax credit.

**HB 880 - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Julie Carr**

**Maryland Income Tax - Decoupling From Amendments to the Internal Revenue Code - Depreciation and Business Interest Expenses**

This bill permanently decouples Maryland income tax from (1) the § 168(n) special depreciation allowance for qualified production property as enacted under the federal One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) of 2025 and (2) amendments to the § 163(j) net business interest expense limitation enacted under OBBBA (and any subsequent federal legislation) and establishes related decoupling modifications.

**HB 895 (SB 387) - Oppose - Passed**

**The Speaker**

**Food Retailers and Third-Party Delivery Service Providers - Dynamic Pricing and Personal Data (Protection From Predatory Pricing Act)**

This Administration bill prohibits 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. The bill also generally prohibits 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.

**SB 387 (HB 895) - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**The President**

**Food Retailers and Third-Party Food Delivery Service Providers - Dynamic Pricing and Personal Data (Protection From Predatory Pricing Act)**

This Administration bill prohibits a “food retailer” or a “third-party food delivery service provider” from (1) engaging in the practice of “dynamic pricing” to increase a price for consumer goods or services for a specific consumer or (2) using personal data to increase 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. 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.

**HB 933 (SB 644) - Support - Passed**

**Del. Jheanelle Wilkins**

**Sales and Use Tax - Certificates Indicating Multiple Points of Use - Alterations**

This bill alters provisions of the State sales and use tax regarding multiple points of use (MPU) certificates for the purchase and use of specified digital codes, digital products, and taxable data and information technology (IT) services. A buyer that obtains authorization from the Comptroller may issue MPU certificates and must provide a MPU certificate in the form and manner required by the Comptroller for each vendor from which the buyer intends to make purchases subject to a MPU certificate. A vendor who receives a MPU certificate must verify the authenticity of the certificate. A MPU certificate provided to a vendor remains in effect for all future purchases from the vendor until the authorized buyer rescinds the MPU certificate, the vendor receives notice that the buyer’s authorization to issue MPU certificates has been revoked, or the vendor otherwise knows or should know that the buyer’s authorization has been revoked.

**SB 644 (HB 933) - Support - Passed**

**Sen. Nancy King**

**Sales and Use Tax - Certificates Indicating Multiple Points of Use - Alterations**

This bill alters provisions of the State sales and use tax regarding multiple points of use (MPU) certificates for the purchase and use of specified digital codes, digital products, and taxable data and information technology (IT) services. A buyer that obtains authorization from the Comptroller may issue MPU certificates and must provide a MPU certificate in the form and manner required by the Comptroller for each vendor from which the buyer intends to make purchases subject to a MPU certificate. A vendor who receives a MPU certificate must verify the authenticity of the certificate. A MPU certificate provided to a vendor remains in effect for all future purchases from the vendor until the authorized buyer rescinds the MPU certificate, the vendor receives notice that the buyer's authorization to issue MPU certificates has been revoked, or the vendor otherwise knows or should know that the buyer's authorization has been revoked.

**HB 1016 (SB 900) - Oppose - Passed**

**Del. Andrew Pruski**

**Noncompete and Conflict of Interest Clauses - Licensed Architects - Employer Workforce Relocation and Out-of-State Employers**

This bill establishes that a noncompete or conflict of interest provision in an employment contract is null and void if it involves an employee of an employer that (1) employs more than 30 employees on the first day of the employee's employment, the majority of whom report to a primary work site located in the State or perform work remotely from within the State and (2) on the date when the employer seeks to enforce the noncompete or conflict of interest provision, does not have its principal place of business in the State or have the majority of its employees report to a primary work site located in the State or perform work remotely from within the State. The bill applies only to employment contracts executed after the bill's effective date.

**SB 900 (HB 1016) - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Justin Ready**

**Noncompete and Conflict of Interest Clauses - Licensed Architects - Employer Workforce Relocation and Out-of-State Employers**

This bill establishes that a noncompete or conflict of interest provision in an employment contract is null and void if it involves a licensed architect who is employed by an employer that (1) employs more than 30 employees on the first day of the employee's employment, the majority of whom report to a primary work site located in the State or perform work remotely from within the State and (2) on the date when the employer seeks to enforce the noncompete or conflict of interest provision, does not have its principal place of business in the State or have the majority of its employees report to a primary work site located in the State or perform work remotely from within the State. The bill applies only to employment contracts executed after the bill's effective date.

**HB 1033 (SB 924) - Support - Did not Pass**

**Del. Sarah Wolek**

**Department of Social and Economic Mobility - Maryland Chamber of Commerce Grant Program - Established (Business Networks Access Act)**

This bill establishes a Maryland Chamber of Commerce Grant Program within the Department of Social and Economic Mobility (DoSEM) to provide grants to chambers of commerce in the State for membership subsidies for underrepresented individuals and for inter-chamber events. DoSEM is responsible for developing the grant application and distributing awards. The bill also specifies eligibility and reporting requirements for the two types of grants. The Governor must include an annual appropriation of \$100,000 in the budget for the grant program.

**SB 924 (HB 1033) - Support - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Kevin Harris**

**Department of Social and Economic Mobility - Maryland Chamber of Commerce Grant Program - Established (Business Networks Access Act)**

This bill establishes a Maryland Chamber of Commerce Grant Program within the Department of Social and Economic Mobility (DoSEM) to provide grants to chambers of commerce in the State for membership subsidies for underrepresented individuals and for inter-chamber events. DoSEM is responsible for developing the grant application and distributing awards. The bill also specifies eligibility and reporting requirements for the two types of grants. The Governor must include an annual appropriation of \$100,000 in the budget for the grant program.

**HB 1128 (SB 826) - Support - Did not Pass**

**Del. Lily Qi**

**Income Tax - Angel Investor Tax Credit for Investments in Emergent Technology**

This bill reinstates, alters, and renames the Innovation Investment Incentive Tax Credit (IIITC) Program and Reserve Fund as the Angel Investor Tax Credit Program and Reserve Fund. A qualified investor that invests at least \$25,000 in a qualified Maryland company engaged in an emergent technology (artificial intelligence, quantum computing, or cybersecurity) may be eligible for a nonrefundable State income tax credit equal to 25% of the amount of the investment, not to exceed \$1.0 million. Any unused credit may be carried forward up to five tax years. The Governor must include an appropriation of at least \$25.0 million to the reserve fund in the annual budget bill.

**SB 826 (HB 1128) - Support - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Katie Hester**

**Income Tax - Angel Investor Tax Credit for Investments in Emergent Technology**

This bill reinstates, alters, and renames the Innovation Investment Incentive Tax Credit (IIITC) Program and Reserve Fund as the Angel Investor Tax Credit Program and Reserve Fund. A qualified investor that invests at least \$25,000 in a qualified Maryland company engaged in an emergent technology (artificial intelligence, quantum computing, or cybersecurity) may be eligible for a nonrefundable State income tax credit equal to 25% of the amount of the investment, not to exceed \$1.0 million. Any unused credit may be carried forward up to five tax years. The Governor must include an appropriation of at least \$25.0 million to the reserve fund in the annual budget bill.

**HB 1197 (SB 766) - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Julie Carr**

**Taxes - Whistleblower Reward Program - Alterations**

This bill expands covered tax enforcement actions under the Comptroller's whistleblower reward program to include judicial or administrative actions brought by the Attorney General or a State agency concerning a tax imposed under State statute that is collected by or paid to the State. The bill makes various conforming changes and specifies related information sharing requirements.

**SB 766 (HB 1197) - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Craig Zucker**

**Taxes - Whistleblower Reward Program - Alterations**

This bill expands covered tax enforcement actions under the Comptroller's whistleblower reward program to include judicial or administrative actions brought by the Attorney General or a State agency concerning a tax imposed under State statute that is collected by or paid to the State. The determination of eligibility for an award with respect to original information resulting in an enforcement action brought under an article other than the Tax-General Article is solely in the discretion of the Attorney General or State agency authorized to bring a covered enforcement action based on the original information. The bill makes various conforming changes and specifies related information sharing requirements. The bill applies retroactively to the provision of original information by a whistleblower in a sworn affidavit to the Comptroller on or after October 1, 2021.

**HB 1241 - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Gabriel Acevero**

**Labor and Employment - Bereavement Leave and Leave for Family Illness - Qualifying Relationships and Type of Leave**

This bill expands authorized uses of leave under the Maryland's Flexible Leave Act by requiring a private-sector employer with at least 15 employees who provides paid leave to its employees to allow an employee to use earned paid leave to care for a family member who is ill, instead of only for an immediate family member, or for bereavement leave upon the death of the employee's family member, instead of only for an immediate family member. Additionally, an employee of a private-sector employer with at least 15 employees may use leave without pay in accordance with the employer's unpaid leave policy for a family member's illness or for bereavement leave.

**HB 1356 (SB 857) - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Lesley Lopez**

**Labor and Employment - Civic and Related Activities - Protection (Maryland Employee Civic Activity and Lawful Expression Protection Act)**

This bill prohibits an employer from taking specific actions related to the political and civic activities of employees or applicants for employment, including prohibitions against (1) taking adverse action against an employee for engaging in protected civic activity, political activity, or lawful expression or (2) requiring an applicant for employment to disclose the applicant's engagement in political or civic activity or lawful expression unless the disclosure is related to specific job requirements. For positions subject to statutory or regulatory speech restrictions, an employer may impose job-related restrictions only if they are narrowly tailored to achieve a legitimate government interest. The bill specifies remedies and penalties for violations of its provisions, and the bill's provisions are severable.

**SB 857 (HB 1356) - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Jeff Waldstreicher**

**Labor and Employment - Civic and Related Activities - Protection (Maryland Employee Civic Activity and Lawful Expression Protection Act)**

This bill prohibits an employer from taking specific actions related to the political and civic activities of employees or applicants for employment, including prohibitions against (1) taking adverse action against an employee for engaging in protected civic activity, political activity, or lawful expression or (2) requiring an applicant for employment to disclose the applicant's engagement in political or civic activity or lawful expression unless the disclosure is related to specific job requirements. For positions subject to statutory or regulatory speech restrictions, an employer may impose job-related restrictions only if they are narrowly tailored to achieve a legitimate government interest. The bill specifies remedies and penalties for violations of its provisions, and the bill's provisions are severable.

**HB 1472 (SB 779) - Support - Did not Pass**

**Del. Lily Qi**

**Better Small Business Employee Benefit Act of 2026**

This bill exempts health benefit plans provided by a professional employer organization (PEO) that engages in employee leasing to small employers from the requirements of the Maryland Health Insurance Reform Act (small group law) and provisions governing the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE). Thus, small businesses may purchase large group health insurance from such entities. The bill also specifies that a welfare benefit plan offered to a worksite employee of a PEO must be treated as a single employer welfare benefit plan and requires a PEO to provide specified disclosures to a small business. The bill takes effect January 1, 2027, and applies to all policies, contracts, and health benefit plans issued, renewed, or delivered in the State on or after that date.

**SB 779 (HB 1472) - Support - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Brian Feldman**

**Better Small Business Employee Benefit Act of 2026**

This bill exempts health benefit plans provided by a professional employer organization (PEO) that engages in employee leasing to small employers from the requirements of the Maryland Health Insurance Reform Act (small group law) and provisions governing the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE). Thus, small businesses may purchase large group health insurance from such entities. The bill also specifies that a welfare benefit

plan offered to a worksite employee of a PEO must be treated as a single employer welfare benefit plan and requires a PEO to provide specified disclosures to a small business. The bill takes effect January 1, 2027, and applies to all policies, contracts, and health benefit plans issued, renewed, or delivered in the State on or after that date.

**HB 1475 - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**The Speaker**

**Consumer Protection - Dynamic Pricing Disclosure and Prohibition on Rent-Setting**

This bill prohibits a merchant from setting the price of specific goods or services using personalized algorithmic pricing and directly (or indirectly) advertising, promoting, labeling, or publishing a communication of the personalized algorithmic pricing to a consumer in the State, unless a clear and conspicuous disclosure is included with a statement indicating how the price was set. The bill also prohibits a person from knowingly or recklessly operating or licensing software, a data analytics service, or an algorithmic device to perform a “coordinating function” to facilitate an agreement between or among property owners or managers. A residential rental property owner or manager may not knowingly or recklessly set (or adjust) rental prices, lease renewal terms, occupancy levels, or other lease terms and conditions in any residential rental property based on a recommendation from software, a data analytics service, or an algorithmic device that performs a coordinating function. Violation of the bill is an unfair, abusive, or deceptive trade practice under the Maryland Consumer Protection Act (MCPA), subject to MCPA’s civil and criminal penalty provisions.

**HB 1479 - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Adrian Boafo**

**Labor and Employment - Minimum Wage - Increase (Maryland Raise the Wage Act)**

Increasing the State minimum wage rate to \$18 for calendar year 2028 for large employers and for calendar year 2029 for small employers; and increasing, beginning January 1, 2029, and January 1, 2030, for large employers and small employers, respectively, the State minimum wage rate in effect for certain periods of time based on annual growth in a certain consumer price index, as determined by the Commissioner of Labor and Industry.

**HB 1515 - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Christopher Adams**

**Labor and Employment - Noncompete and Conflict of Interest Clauses - Employer Relocation**

Applying certain provisions of law establishing that certain noncompete and conflict of interest provisions in certain employment contracts are null and void as being against the public policy of the State to employees of certain employers that relocate majority of its employees or principal place of business outside the State.

**HB 1524 - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Del. Jeffrie Long**

**Labor and Employment - Paid Leave - Attendance at School Functions**

This bill requires an employer with at least 15 employees and governmental units to provide each employee who is a parent with at least 20 hours each year of paid leave to attend a school function at the public or nonpublic elementary or secondary school at which the employee's child is enrolled. An employee may not use more than 2 hours of leave provided under the bill each month, and the bill specifies other terms and conditions of the leave. If the Commissioner of Labor and Industry determines that an employer has violated the bill, the commissioner must issue an order compelling compliance with the bill.

**SB 597 - Support - Passed**

**Sen. Katie Hester**

**Higher Education - Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership**

This bill (1) establishes the Maryland Artificial Intelligence (AI) Partnership in the University System of Maryland (USM) to develop a strategic plan and coordinate AI initiatives; (2) requires the partnership to establish Maryland Technology Extension Hubs; (3) establishes an AI Incubation Lab in USM in coordination with the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) and subject to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to assist State agencies to accelerate the responsible use of AI; (4) requires Morgan State University's (MSU) Center for Equitable AI and Machine Learning Systems to support State agencies on questions relating to productive and ethical use of AI; (5) authorizes the Governor's AI Subcabinet to request research from the center; and (6) establishes the AI Public Service Fellowship in USM.

**SB 889 - Oppose - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Clarence Lam**

**Consumer Protection and Labor and Employment - Electronic Shelving Labels and Surveillance-Based Price and Wage Setting - Prohibitions**

This bill prohibits merchants doing business or providing consumer goods in the State from using surveillance-based price setting. The bill also prohibits a food retailer from using electronic shelving labels or any digital shelf display technology to display the price of consumer goods; instead, a food retailer must use nondigital presentations of price. A violation of these requirements is an unfair, abusive, or deceptive trade practice under the Maryland Consumer Protection Act (MCPA), subject to MCPA's civil and criminal penalty provisions. The bill also prohibits surveillance-based wage setting, except under limited circumstances, and authorizes the Commissioner of Labor and Industry in the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) to investigate and take specified actions after receiving a written complaint from an employee.

**Monitored Bills**

**HB 37 - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. Matthew Schindler**

**General Assembly - Employment and Leave Protection for Members**

This bill prohibits an employer from (1) depriving an employee who is a member of the General Assembly of employment or coerce, intimidate, or threaten to discharge an individual because the individual loses employment time to performing responsibilities as a member of the General Assembly, or exercises a right to refrain from work, as specified; (2) requiring an individual who spent at least 4 hours, including travel time, to perform responsibilities as a member of the General Assembly to work specified early morning or nighttime employment shifts; or (3) requiring an employee who is a member of the General Assembly to use the employee's annual, sick, or vacation leave to perform responsibilities as a member. "Responsibilities as a member of the General Assembly" does not include campaigning on behalf of a member or another candidate for elected office. The prohibition applies regardless of whether the General Assembly is in session. An employer who violates the bill's provisions is subject to a fine not exceeding \$1,000.

**HB 86 - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. Joe Vogel**

**State and Local Employees - Cancer Screening - Paid Leave**

This bill may entitle all State employees (including temporary and part-time employees) and all local government employees to up to four hours of paid cancer screening leave in any 12-month period after obtaining approval from their appointing authorities. The Secretary of Budget and Management and the governing body of each county or municipality must adopt regulations governing cancer screening leave. The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

**HB 103 - Monitor - Passed**

**Del. Vaughn Stewart**

**Consumer Protection - Consumer Contracts - Prohibited Waivers**

This bill prohibits a consumer contract from waiving, limiting, impairing, or disclaiming statutory or punitive damages authorized by federal or State law. The bill prohibits a waiver by agreement of its requirements. The bill incorporates these provisions within Chapter 194 of 2025, which establishes that a provision in a consumer contract that sets a shorter period of time to bring an action under or on the contract than required by State law when the contract is issued or delivered is against State policy, illegal, and void. Although the bill generally maintains the provisions of Chapter 194, it repeals certain exemptions. The bill also contains a severability clause and only applies prospectively. The bill takes effect on the later of October 1, 2026, or the taking effect of Chapter 194 (June 1, 2026), if the effective date of Chapter 194 is amended.

**HB 120 - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. Mark Fisher**

**Moratorium on Construction of New Data Centers - Co-Location and Generation Contingency**

This emergency bill prohibits approval or construction of a data center in the State that has not received all required permits before the bill takes effect. The bill terminates if the General Assembly enacts legislation that requires (1) all new data centers to be co-located with a new or existing specified power generation facility and (2) construction at a co-located power generation facility of additional power generation capacity that meets or exceeds the data center's power needs.

**HB 133 - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. Christopher Bouchat**

**Income Tax and Sales and Use Tax - Rate Reductions and Alterations**

This bill (1) repeals the State's ordinary individual income tax rates and brackets and imposes a 3% flat income tax rate on Maryland taxable income for taxpayers with federal adjusted gross income (AGI) in excess of \$10,000; (2) increases the net capital gain surtax rate from 2% to 3%, applies the surtax to all taxpayers regardless of federal AGI, and exempts from the surtax the first \$10,000 of net capital gain of an individual who is at least 65 years old; (3) reduces the corporate income tax rate from 8.25% to 3%; (4) reduces the general State sales and use tax rate and the sales and use tax rates imposed on the retail sale of alcoholic beverages and adult-use cannabis to 3%; and (5) repeals the 3% sales and use tax on data and information technology (IT) services. The bill takes effect July 1, 2026. The income tax provisions apply to tax year 2026 and beyond.

**HB 144 - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. Joe Vogel**

**Commercial Law - Fair Pricing and Market Competition Fund - Establishment**

This bill establishes the Fair Pricing and Market Competition Fund as a special fund to be administered by the Attorney General. The fund's purpose is to provide additional funding to support the Antitrust Division in the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) in the enforcement of the Maryland Antitrust Act (MAA). The bill also requires that certain revenue from civil penalties assessed under § 11-209 of the Commercial Law Article be paid to the special fund (instead of the general fund). For fiscal 2028 through 2033, the Governor must include in the annual budget bill an appropriation to the fund in an amount sufficient to employ one full-time investigator position in the division.

**HB 191 - Monitor - Passed**

**Del. Greg Wims**

**Consumer Protection - Retail Transactions for Essential Consumer Goods - Cash Payments**

This bill establishes that, for certain transactions, a merchant may not (1) prohibit a person from making a cash payment to purchase an essential consumer good; (2) require a person to use a credit or debit card to purchase an essential consumer good; or (3) charge or collect a higher price than charged or collected for an equivalent cashless transaction (whether or not the difference in price is described as a fee) for making a cash payment for the purchase of an essential consumer good. Violation of the bill is an unfair, abusive, or deceptive trade practice under the Maryland Consumer Protection Act (MCPA). However, certain enforcement provisions of MCPA (including MCPA's criminal penalties) do not apply to violations of the bill; instead, the bill establishes a unique penalty structure for violators. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) must provide a merchant who violates the bill with at least two separate opportunities to comply. A merchant who does not subsequently comply is subject to a fine of up to \$500 for each violation; if the merchant is fined and violates the bill again, the merchant is subject to a fine of up to \$1,000 for each subsequent violation.

**HB 242 (SB 216) - Monitor - Passed**

**Chair, Economic Matters Committee**

**Unemployment Insurance - Confidentiality of Information**

This departmental bill updates the existing framework for the protection of sensitive unemployment insurance (UI) information to comply with federal requirements. The bill requires that (1) the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) maintain the confidentiality of specified claimant and employer records and (2) confidentiality provisions in State law related to UI data be interpreted in a manner that ensures compliance with federal law. It authorizes the Secretary of Labor to disclose certain information under specified circumstances to comply with federal regulations. Additionally, the bill expands criminal penalties for the unauthorized disclosure of information to former MD Labor employees and third-party recipients.

**SB 216 (HB 242) - Monitor - Passed**

**Chair, Finance Committee**

**Unemployment Insurance - Confidentiality of Information**

This departmental bill updates the existing framework for the protection of sensitive unemployment insurance (UI) information to comply with federal requirements. The bill requires that (1) the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) maintain the confidentiality of specified claimant and employer records and (2) confidentiality provisions in State law related to UI data be interpreted in a manner that ensures compliance with federal law. It authorizes the Secretary of Labor to disclose certain information under specified circumstances to comply with federal regulations. Additionally, the bill expands criminal penalties for the unauthorized disclosure of information to former MD Labor employees and third-party recipients.

**HB 390 (SB 282) - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**The Speaker**

**Budget Bill (Fiscal Year 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; etc.

**SB 282 (HB 390) - Monitor - Passed**

**The President**

**Budget Bill (Fiscal Year 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; etc.

**HB 516 - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. Joe Vogel**

**Maryland Department of Labor - Investigation of Complaints - Requirements (Worksite Enforcement Act of 2026)**

This bill requires the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) to establish procedures for receiving, reviewing, and investigating complaints regarding matters under its jurisdiction, including management, misconduct, abuse, fraud, waste, and behavior that threatens public safety or demonstrates negligence, incompetence, or malfeasance. The bill establishes rules and procedures for handling complaints and requires MD Labor to hire five investigators to handle the additional complaints under the bill. Beginning in fiscal 2027 and annually thereafter, the Governor must include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$500,000 for the employment of the investigators.

**HB 560 - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. Julie Carr**

**Sales and Use Tax and Property Tax - Exemptions for Data Centers - Repeal**

This bill repeals a specified sales and use tax exemption for the sale of qualified data center personal property for use at a qualified data center. The bill also repeals the authority of local governments to reduce or eliminate the percentage of the assessment of any data center personal property used in a qualified data center.

**HB 870 - Monitor - Passed**

**Del. Marc Korman**

**Environment - Permit Applications for New Buildings - Notice (Large Buildings for Tomorrow Act)**

This bill requires, beginning July 1, 2026, within 10 business days after a local government accepts a permit application for a new building that has a proposed gross floor area of 35,000 square feet or more (excluding the parking garage area), the local government to provide notice of the permit application to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). The bill applies only prospectively to new construction for which a complete commercial or residential service request is made to the local utility or a development application or building permit application is filed with a local government after the bill's effective date.

**HB 916 (SB 674) - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. Ryan Spiegel**

**Transportation - Regional Transportation Authorities**

This bill establishes three regional transportation authorities, and related special funds, to prepare and implement regional transportation projects and programs for the Baltimore region, the Capital region, and the Southern Maryland region, as those regions are defined. The bill specifies the duties and powers of each authority and requires each special fund to be used to finance transportation facilities in its respective region. The bill imposes three tax surcharges (hotel, sales tax, and transfer tax) to provide funding to capitalize the special funds and for distribution to counties and municipalities in the respective regions. The bill also authorizes the authorities to issue various types of bonds (which the bill specifies are not considered State debt) to finance the cost of transportation facilities and projects within their respective regions.

**SB 674 (HB 916) - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Alonzo Washington**

**Transportation - Regional Transportation Authorities**

This bill establishes three regional transportation authorities, and related special funds, to prepare and implement regional transportation projects and programs for the Baltimore region, the Capital region, and the Southern Maryland region, as those regions are defined. The bill specifies the duties and powers of each authority and requires each special fund to be used to finance transportation facilities in its respective region. The bill imposes three tax surcharges (hotel, sales tax, and transfer tax) to provide funding to capitalize the special funds and for distribution to counties and municipalities in the respective regions. The bill also authorizes the authorities to issue various types of bonds (which the bill specifies are not considered State debt) to finance the cost of transportation facilities and projects within their respective regions.

**HB 988 - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. Wayne Hartman**

**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 conforming changes under the Housing and Community Development Article.

**HB 1026 (SB 893) - Monitor - Passed**

**Del. Pam Queen**

**Business Regulation - Rounding Cash Transactions - Authorization**

This emergency bill authorizes a merchant to round certain cash transactions and the amount of change due to a customer up or down to the nearest cent divisible by five, as specified. The bill also authorizes an employer to round a wage that the employer pays using cash up or down to the nearest cent divisible by five, as specified. The bill preempts any existing regulations, rules, and ordinances that conflict with the Act. The Secretary of Labor may adopt regulations to carry out the bill's provisions.

**SB 893 (HB 1026) - Monitor - Passed**

**Sen. Dawn Gile**

**Business Regulation - Rounding Cash Transactions - Authorization**

This emergency bill authorizes a merchant to round the price and the amount of change due to a customer up or down to the nearest cent divisible by five, as specified. It applies only to the portion of a price of an in-person transaction or of a telephone, mail, or Internet transaction for which a customer pays using cash if the total price is at least five cents. The bill's provisions (1) do not apply to a transaction for a good or service paid with exact change and (2) may not be construed to authorize rounding in a manner that alters the calculation of any tax or fee applicable to the transaction.

The bill preempts any existing regulations, rules, and ordinances that conflict with its provisions. The Secretary of Labor may adopt regulations to carry out the bill's provisions.

**HB 1105 (SB 979) - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. Elizabeth Embry**

**Statute of Limitations - Civil Suits to Enforce Local Consumer Protection Codes**

This bill increases, from one year to three years, the statute of limitations for a civil suit for enforcement of a local consumer protection code for which equitable relief, a fine, or a penalty is provided. The statute of limitations begins to run when the local authorities knew or reasonably should have known of the violation.

**SB 979 (HB 1105) - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Cory McCray**

**Statute of Limitations - Prosecution or Enforcement of Local Consumer Protection Codes**

Increasing from 1 year to 3 years the statute of limitations for the prosecution or suit for enforcement of local consumer protection codes for which equitable relief, a fine, or a penalty is provided.

**HB 1142 - Monitor - Passed**

**Del. Jheanelle Wilkins**

**Task Force to Modernize County and Municipal Revenue Structures**

This bill establishes a Task Force to Modernize County and Municipal Revenue Structures. The task force must study and evaluate the revenue structure of county and municipal governments within the State and make recommendations regarding the authority of county and municipal governments to increase sources of revenue. The task force must submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor, the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, the House Appropriations Committee, and the House Ways and Means Committee by December 1, 2026. The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) must provide staff support for the task force.

**HB 1217 (SB 479) - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. William Wivell**

**Environment - Building Energy Performance Standards and Energy Use Intensity Targets - Exemptions**

This bill prohibits the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) from requiring a covered building that received a use and occupancy permit before June 1, 2022, to comply with building energy performance standards (BEPS) or energy use intensity (EUI) targets developed in accordance with the Climate Solutions Now Act (CSNA) until it becomes necessary to replace lighting systems; heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems; or other major components of the covered building due to component failure or the end of life of those components.

**SB 479 (HB 1217) - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Mike McKay**

**Environment - Building Energy Performance Standards and Energy Use Intensity Targets - Exemptions**

This bill prohibits the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) from requiring a covered building that received a use and occupancy permit before June 1, 2022, to comply with building energy performance standards (BEPS) or energy use intensity (EUI) targets developed in accordance with the Climate Solutions Now Act (CSNA) until it becomes necessary to replace lighting systems; heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems; or other major components of the covered building due to component failure or the end of life of those components.

**HB 1229 (SB 886) - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. Vaughn Stewart**

**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.

**SB 886 (HB 1229) - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Sen. C. Muse**

**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.

**HB 1307 - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. C. Wilson**

**State Finance and Procurement - Employers Receiving State Public Funds - Unfair Labor Practices**

Requiring certain employers that receive \$250,000 or more in State public funds as part of a single transaction or contract with the State, as a condition of receiving the funds, to agree not to engage in certain unfair labor practices and to make other related agreements and acknowledgements; authorizing the State to recapture the State public funds received by an employer who violates certain agreements; etc.

**HB 1480 (SB 831) - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. Luke Clippinger**

**Labor Law - Child Labor Penalties, Private Sector Employee Labor Relations, and State Employee Labor Standards**

This bill prohibits a unit in the Executive Branch from petitioning or applying to the federal government for a waiver of any federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) provision that is applicable to the unit, even if the waiver is otherwise authorized under federal law. The bill also prohibits employers from forming specified employee involvement organizations (EIOs) that are not: subject to the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) or under the jurisdiction of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The Commissioner of Labor and Industry may assess a civil penalty against a person who violates specified child labor laws. The bill expands the jurisdiction of the Public Employee Relations Board (PERB) to cover private employees under specified conditions if a contingency is met. The bill takes effect June 1, 2026, though some provisions of the bill are contingent on specified federal actions.

**SB 831 (HB 1480) - Monitor - Passed**

**Sen. Bill Ferguson**

**Labor Law - Child Labor Penalties, Private Sector Employee Labor Relations, and State Employee Labor Standards**

This bill prohibits a unit in the Executive Branch from petitioning or applying to the federal government for a waiver of any federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) provision that is applicable to the unit, even if the waiver is otherwise authorized under federal law. The bill also prohibits employers from forming specified employee involvement organizations (EIOs) that are not: subject to the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) or under the jurisdiction of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The Commissioner of Labor and Industry may assess a civil penalty against a person who violates specified child labor laws. The bill expands the jurisdiction of the Public Employee Relations Board (PERB) to cover private employees under specified conditions if a contingency is met. The bill takes effect June 1, 2026, though some provisions of the bill are contingent on specified federal actions.

**HB 1510 - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. Robin Grammer**

**Unemployment Insurance - Fraud Prevention, Detection, and Enforcement**

This bill enhances requirements related to the prevention, detection, and enforcement of unemployment insurance (UI) fraud in the State. Among other things, the bill requires the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) to (1) incorporate multifactor authentication (MFA) for all claimants and employers accessing UI accounts and (2) investigate specified types of suspected UI fraud. It requires every claimant to submit proof of identification at the time of filing for benefits, increases penalties for UI fraud, and authorizes the recovery of overpaid benefits and penalties by withholding State income tax refunds. The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

**HB 1512 - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. Frank Conaway**

**Business Regulation - Rounding Cash Transactions - Remittance to Comptroller**

This bill requires a merchant that rounds up a purchase price to the nearest five cents to remit to the Comptroller the difference between (1) the total price the customer is required to pay after the rounding occurs and (2) the price before the rounding occurs in a cash transaction. The Comptroller must distribute the revenue collected to the general fund. The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

**HB 1543 - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. Harry Bhandari**

**Labor and Employment - Temporary Workers**

Establishing the Temporary Worker Oversight Unit in the Maryland Department of Labor; requiring recruiters of temporary workers that operate in the State to register with the Department and post a certain bond; prohibiting employers and recruiters of temporary workers from taking certain actions; prohibiting an employer from employing a temporary worker before filing a certain affidavit; authorizing temporary workers to allow representatives of certain organizations to enter employer-provided housing; etc.

**HB 1595 (SB 427) - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Del. Kevin Hornberger**

**Property Taxes - Authority of Counties to Establish a Subclass and Set a Special Rate for Personal Property of Data Centers**

Authorizing the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore City or the governing body of a county to establish, by law, a subclass of personal property consisting of all the personal property of certain qualified data centers and set a special personal property tax rate for the subclass; and applying the Act to all taxable years beginning after June 30, 2026.

**SB 427 (HB 1595) - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Karen Young**

**Property Taxes - Authority of Counties to Establish a Subclass and Set a Special Rate for Personal Property of Data Centers**

This bill authorizes Baltimore City and county governments to establish, by law, a subclass of personal property consisting of all the personal property of a specified qualified data center. Baltimore City and county governments are authorized to set a single special personal property tax rate for all the personal property of a specified qualified data center.

**SB 694 - Monitor - Passed**

**Sen. William Smith**

**Human Relations - Violations of County Discrimination Laws - Complaints**

This bill establishes that filing a complaint with the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) satisfies specified prerequisites to commencing a civil action alleging the violation of a discriminatory act prohibited by a county or local discrimination law.

**SB 695 - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Cheryl Kagan**

**Consumer Protection - Driver's License and ID Card Swiping - Regulation**

This bill generally prohibits a person from swiping the driver's license or identification (ID) card of an individual. The bill specifies the circumstances in which the swiping prohibition does not apply and limits how any information obtained from swiping may be used. Violation of the bill is an unfair, abusive, or deceptive trade practice under the Maryland Consumer Protection Act (MCPA), subject to MCPA's civil and criminal penalty provisions.

**SB 757 - Monitor - Passed**

**Sen. Jim Rosapepe**

**Economic Development - Local Sourcing Database**

This bill requires the Department of Commerce to develop and maintain a searchable online database, to be known as the Maryland Local Sourcing Portal, to connect businesses in the State with local sources for tariff-impacted goods and other supplies. By December 31 each year, Commerce must report to the General Assembly on the use and effectiveness of the portal. The bill terminates September 30, 2031.

**SB 804 - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Pamela Beidle**

**Labor and Employment - Occupational Safety and Health - Revisions to Heat Stress Standards**

This bill repeals the requirement that the Commissioner of Labor and Industry in the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) develop and adopt regulations that require employers to protect employees from heat-related illness caused by heat stress and instead, establishes substantially similar, but somewhat less stringent workplace heat-stress standards in statute.

**SB 853 - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Sen. Charles Sydnor**

**Economic Development Activity - Nondisclosure Agreements**

This bill prohibits, notwithstanding any other provision of law, the following individuals from entering into a nondisclosure agreement with a person involved in an economic development activity, including a person involved in establishing or operating a data center: (1) specified employees of and contractors/consultants to the Department of Commerce or any other entity or program governed by the Economic Development Article; (2) govern-

ing bodies, and specified employees and contractors/consultants to governing bodies or any other entity or program governed by the Local Government Article; and (3) legislators and specified employees and contractors/consultants to a legislator or the General Assembly. The bill establishes that “instrumentality of the State” includes a public service company, as defined under the Public Utilities Article. The bill also makes technical changes.

**SB 871 - Monitor - Did not Pass**

**Sen. William Smith**

**Civil Actions - Punitive Damage Awards - Surcharge**

This bill establishes that punitive damages may be awarded in a civil action alleging negligence only if the plaintiff proves by clear and convincing evidence that the defendant acted with “gross negligence,” as defined under the bill. At the conclusion of all proceedings relating to the civil action, the State Court Administrator must assess a surcharge, equal to 50% of an award of punitive damages; the surcharge must be paid to the State by the defendant against whom the punitive damages were entered. A jury may not be informed of the surcharge, and the surcharge (1) is an additional payment that may not in any way impact the total amount of punitive damages a defendant is ordered to pay a plaintiff and (2) may not be construed to penalize a plaintiff who has been awarded punitive damages. The State Court Administrator must deposit money collected from the surcharge into the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future Fund (BMFF). The bill expresses the intent of the General Assembly that the bill be applied and interpreted to abrogate the holding establishing the punitive damages criteria in *Owens-Illinois, Inc. v. Zenobia*, 325 Md. 420 (1992). The bill applies prospectively to actions for punitive damages filed on or after the bill’s October 1, 2026 effective date.