



The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

July 16, 2007

Governor Martin O'Malley
State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor O'Malley:

In recent months, there has been much discussion in Annapolis about the projected shortfall in next year's budget and the need for the state to move beyond the short term budget fixes that characterized the last four years.

We strongly agree that Maryland needs a new, fiscally responsible and forward-thinking strategy to balance the state's books.

However, we are concerned that too much of the recent debate has focused on the needs of the government, rather than on the needs and aspirations of our people. The budget is a moral document that reflects our community's priorities and values. Our constituents want fiscal policies that will protect our quality of life and shape a decent future for all of our children and grandchildren.

They want assurance that our local public schools have the resources to recruit and retain great teachers for their children. And that schools will be built and maintained to relieve overcrowding and close temporary annexes permanently.

They want to be able to afford to send their children to Maryland's colleges, without putting their families in debt for a lifetime.

They want to know that quality, affordable health care will be there for their families when they need it and that the medical bills they pay will be for a system that makes sense.

They want Maryland to do its share to save the Chesapeake Bay and to reduce global warming.

They want a transportation network that reduces traffic congestion and protects both our environment and our quality of life.

And they want a tax system based on ability to pay; one that assures that all pay their fair share; and one that does not deepen the sharp inequalities that have developed between the vast majority of working families and the privileged few.

As you develop a plan to address the state's fiscal policy, we urge you to focus on these goals:

- 1. The fiscal plan should assure adequate funding to meet the needs and priorities of Maryland's families.** It should invest in public schools and colleges, expand health care for working families, protect our environment, and reduce traffic congestion.
- 2. The plan should provide comprehensive long-term solutions, not quick fixes that will return the state to the same problems a few years from now.** The state's revenue system must be modernized to reflect public needs and the reality of the state's economy in the 21st century.
- 3. The plan as a whole should be progressive, shifting the relative burden off of working families, small business, and those on fixed incomes.** Maryland's current tax system puts too much of the burden on those least able to pay. That policy is not fair and leaves the state exposed to recurring deficits.
- 4. The plan should directly promote healthy practices in our communities and a cleaner environment.** Thoughtful and effective fiscal policies will improve the health of our people and our environment at the same time as they raise revenue.

The failed policies of the recent past give us the opportunity today to bring our budget and fiscal policies into alignment with our values and real priorities. We look forward to working with you, Lieutenant Governor Brown, and our colleagues in the General Assembly on this critically important effort.

Best wishes,

Paul G. Pinsky
Brian Frosh
Jim Rosapepe
Rich Madaleno
Jamie Raskin
Joan Carter Conway
Lisa Gladden
Gwendolyn Britt
Mike Lenett
Anthony Muse
Jennie Forehand
Delores Kelley
Rob Garagiola
Verna Jones