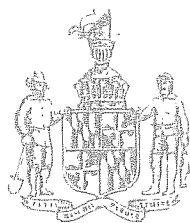


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SENATE DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS ANNOUNCE JOINT PRIORITIES
Agenda focuses on solutions to help a diverse array of Marylanders

Annapolis, Maryland – This morning, Democratic and Republican Caucus leaders joined together with members for a bipartisan press conference on joint priorities for the session. This agenda is focused on helping Marylanders from around the state with proposals on education, identity theft, scholarships for veterans, job assistance and protection for family farms.

“This recession, cannot be used as an excuse to ignore some of the basic problems that families in our state face,” said Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. “While politicians in Washington DC are unable to find common ground on even the simplest of issues, we are moving forward together on solving issues that affect Marylanders. These are not Democratic or Republican priorities, these are Maryland priorities.”

“This legislation is more than just symbolic bipartisanship,” stated Senate Minority Leader E.J. Pipkin. “We are committed to preserving the people’s faith that elected representatives can craft policies that can have major positive impacts on the lives of Marylanders.”

The Senate bipartisan policy agenda includes the following bills:

- **Child Identity Lock (Astle & Klausmeier and others):** Under current law, a parent or guardian who believes their minor child’s social security number is at risk for

identity theft may not put a credit freeze on the child's credit report with a credit reporting agency. A credit reporting agency will not create a report for a child under the age of 16, but a person fraudulently calling with a child's social security number and a false birthdate would be able to create multiple fraudulent accounts. A parent cannot even call the credit reporting agencies frequently to see if this has occurred with their child's information because when the child turns 16, their credit will be damaged due to too many inquiries.

The bill would allow a parent or guardian to create a credit report for a minor for the purposes of freezing the report and preventing fraudulent use of a minor's social security number

- **Education – Accountability for Learning in Core Content Areas including Social Studies and Civics (Miller & Kittleman and others):** In response to the cancellation of the HSA in Government last year, the Maryland Social Studies Council, Common Cause Maryland and other interested parties have been meeting to develop a plan to ensure that social studies is taught as a core content area and is not marginalized or ignored completely at each level of public school. The elimination of the Government HSA most recently resulted in Maryland losing points in the national ranking of public schools although the number one ranking was still retained.

The bill would reinforce that social studies (along with reading, mathematics, language and science) is a core discipline area that encompasses many topics, such as the study of civics, government, history, economics and geography. Without being overly proscriptive or dictating curriculum, the bill would provide that similar to other common core areas, public school systems will also be held accountable for teaching social studies and calls for Maryland's school children to be assessed once at each instructional level (elementary, middle and high school) on their knowledge of social studies content, skills and processes.

- **Family Farm Protection Act (Miller, Young, Middleton, Dyson, Garagiola & Mathias and others):** To preserve as many remaining family farms as possible, the bill would exempt from the State estate tax up to \$5.0 million of qualified agricultural property. In order to qualify for the exemption, the property must pass from a decedent to a qualified recipient who enters into an agreement to use the property for farming purposes after the decedent's death. If the property is not used as a farm within a 10 year period, the estate tax must be repaid upon the sale of the property.
- **Income Tax Credit for Security Clearances (Manno and others):** Many employees who are qualified for work with federal contractors are unable to afford obtaining required security clearances for high level work and it becomes a financial disincentive for an employer to hire and pay for the clearances. To stimulate

employment opportunities for Maryland residents, the bill would provide an income tax credit to offset the cost of a security clearance equal to \$3,000 or 50% of the cost of the clearance. The credit is capped at \$6 million and would be evaluated each year based on the effectiveness of the credit in job creation, advancement and retention. The bill would sunset after 3 years.

- **Education - Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship - Extension (Garagiola and others):** The Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship Program is designed to provide financial assistance to U.S. armed forces personnel who served in the Afghanistan or Iraq Conflicts, and their sons, daughters, or spouses who are current high school seniors, and full-time and part-time, degree-seeking undergraduate students enrolled in an eligible accredited Maryland postsecondary institution.

This legislation would extend the Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship to June 30, 2020. The Scholarship program was created by the Senate through legislation in 2006 (SB 305-06), which had a sunset date of June 30, 2012. The Program was first extended to June 30, 2016, through legislation in 2008 (SB 608-08).