

May 16, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson
President of the Senate of Maryland
H-107 State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
Speaker of the House of Delegates
H-101 State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Speaker Jones,

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I have exercised my constitutional authority to veto two individual line items in HB 350, the Budget Bill for Fiscal Year 2026, which have been increased above proposed appropriations.

The first line item which I have vetoed is Section 21, Subsection 56 of the enrolled text of the budget bill, from line 40 on page 334 to line 5 on page 335, which reads as follows:

“(56) \$500,000 in special funds from the renewable and clean energy subaccount of the SEIF is added to the appropriation for program E00A01.01 Executive Direction within the Comptroller of Maryland for the purpose of funding a study, including the costs related to a consultant, required under SB 149 or HB 128, contingent on the enactment of SB 149 or HB 128 requiring a study. Funds not expended for this added purpose may not be transferred by budget amendment or otherwise to any other purpose and shall revert to the SEIF.”

The second line item which I have vetoed is Section 21, Subsection 61 of the enrolled text of the budget bill, from line 31 to line 36 on page 335, which reads as follows:

“(61) \$230,128 in general funds and 3.0 regular positions are added to the appropriation for program R00A01.06 Office of the Deputy for Operations within Headquarters within the Maryland State Department of Education for the purpose of assisting local education agencies with cybersecurity efforts. Funds not expended for this added purpose may not be transferred by budget amendment or otherwise to any other purpose and shall revert to the General Fund.”

I have signed the remainder of House Bill 350 into law.

Maryland's Budget Situation

I am proud of the work we did this session to place Maryland's state government on a stronger fiscal footing. In partnership, we turned a deficit into a surplus, while keeping funding in the Rainy Day Fund above mandated levels. We ensured that 94% of Marylanders would either receive a tax break or see no change in their income taxes, while also asking those who have done very well financially to pay slightly more to help improve our public schools, keep our roads and transit safe, and ensure access to high quality health care. Together, we reduced spending by over \$2 billion – the single largest cut in a Maryland state budget in sixteen years.

Still, no amount of success can paper over the chaos from Washington, D.C. We face a real and present danger from a White House that continues to attack our economy with reckless abandon. In a time of profound uncertainty, we must use our limited funds to prioritize policies that protect our people from the ravages of Washington; anything that fails to meet that high bar must wait for another time.

The Need to End Wasteful Practices

Our current budget situation requires us to reconsider and change past practices that have resulted in unnecessary spending by the State. Increasingly over recent decades, as an alternative to passing legislation taking action on a topic, the legislature has passed bills mandating studies or reports on that topic. While such bills can be a first step to addressing complex issues and allow the signaling of support for an issue without making real commitments, the practice has become so commonplace that it is now a significant financial and staff burden on state government. In addition, such reporting requirements have at times delayed prompt action on important issues, and in the face of the onslaught from the current Administration in Washington the State needs to respond to important issues more quickly. Studies can serve a purpose, but their overuse is a drag on State government.

Prior to the 2025 legislative session, the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) was tracking a total of 3,901 mandated reports, a number which excludes the reports required annually by the Joint Chairmen's Report. Many of these reports are never read and simply collect dust on shelves, but nonetheless executive branch agencies are required to dedicate funding and staff time to each, in many cases, with restrictions on their budget appropriations if they fail to comply. While it is impossible to calculate the total amount of staff time and state funding necessary to complete and file these reports, it is a reasonable assumption that the cost runs to the tens of millions of dollars.

Line item 21–56 pertains to a study required by SB 149 and HB 128, which I have also vetoed. I have addressed in more depth my reasons for vetoing those bills in a

separate letter, but the report funded by this line item is duplicative of a number of other reports that have already been issued, and therefore this mandated funding is both unnecessary and wasteful.

I am hopeful that this line item veto can serve as the starting point for a more extensive conversation about the overuse of reporting requirements, not only in statute and uncodified legislative language but in regulations and executive orders, as we jointly seek to streamline state government.

The Need to Focus on Our Core Mission

Our budget challenges also highlight the need for the State and its agencies to focus on their core missions. At a time where we have jointly made difficult decisions about cuts to vital services, adding additional spending which is tangential to those core missions is inappropriate.

The core mission of MSDE is to ensure that every child in Maryland receives a world class education. I have sought in my own proposals to maintain that focus, for example by proposing the creation and funding of the Academic Excellence Program. The services proposed by that program are proven to have a significant and measurable impact on student success. To cut funding for such proven programs which will help children learn while adding funding for a task that is tangential to MSDE's core mission makes little sense. And yet, that is exactly what was proposed in the budget bill.

Line item 21–61 proposes the creation of three positions at the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) focused on cybersecurity in local school systems. Ensuring strong cybersecurity protections in every government agency is essential, but the creation of these positions at MSDE represents mission creep for that agency. Further, it duplicates existing state government resources, namely the Office of Security Management within the Department of Information Technology (DoIT). That office is tasked with directly supporting local school systems in developing cybersecurity preparedness and response plans, implementing best practices developed by DoIT, and connecting local entities to appropriate cybersecurity preparedness and response resources.

Further, MSDE advises that each such cybersecurity position would require a minimum of \$140,000 in funding for salary and benefits, but the line item only proposes \$230,000 in total funding, which is not even adequate to fund two positions. As these positions are tangential to MSDE's core mission and the proposed funding is not adequate to their creation, I have vetoed this line item as well.

Sincerely,

Wes Moore
Governor