

Vetoed Bills and Messages from the Governor of Maryland

A total of 5 bills were vetoed by the Governor following the 2026 Regular Session of the General Assembly. Of these vetoed bills, 3 originated in the Senate and 2 originated in the House of Delegates. Pursuant to the provisions of Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, a vetoed bill will not be returned to the Legislature when a new General Assembly of Maryland has been elected and sworn in since the passage of the vetoed bill. However, if the General Assembly convenes in Special Session prior to the election and swearing in of the newly elected members, the vetoed bills may be reconsidered in order to determine whether the veto is sustained or overridden.

2026 Session

The Department of Legislative Services
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List of Senate Bills Vetoed

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Vetoed Senate Bills and Messages

May 22, 2026

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

Dear President Ferguson,

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I have vetoed Senate Bill 426 – *Public Information Act – Divorce Records*.

Senate Bill 426 amends the Maryland Public Information Act (PIA) to require that custodians under the PIA deny access to most records pertaining to divorce proceedings, including applications for divorce, financial records, divorce settlement records, and custody orders. However, the bill exempts final divorce decrees; and custodians are required to provide divorce-related records to an applicant who is a person in interest, an attorney representing a person in interest, or a person authorized by court order to inspect the records.

Inspired by a terrible case of divorce records falling into the wrong hands and misused as part of an online harassment campaign, Senate Bill 426 attempts to protect individuals and families navigating a legal process that is already difficult and complex. Although well-intended, protective measures currently exist to provide for what Senate Bill 426 sets out to accomplish.

If proper procedures had been followed, this painful and unfortunate incident most likely could have been avoided. In divorce and custody proceedings, personal information is shielded and upon filing, a Notice of Restricted Information is required if personal information is included in the pleading. It is also standard procedure in Family Law case orders to incorporate language to shield exhibits and agreements. Furthermore, a party can request that a case file or specific pleading be sealed or shielded.

Senate Bill 426 also presents interpretive challenges that could lead to larger constitutional questions. For instance, the legislation restricts access to most divorce-related court records through the PIA; however, most judicial records are governed by the Maryland Rules on Access to Judicial Records, as opposed to the PIA, and the PIA generally defers to the Rules. The obvious question here is whether the PIA is the right vehicle to implement these changes; or, if the Rules are the better fit.

Under the Maryland Constitution, the Supreme Court of Maryland has the authority to adopt rules governing the practice, procedure, and administration for all state courts. Although these rules carry the force of law unless modified by the legislative branch, Senate Bill 426 lacks clarity and is open to interpretation. The Attorney General's Office points

out, for instance, that the Judiciary may interpret the bill not to apply to judicial records. If, however, the legislation is broadly interpreted to include judicial court records – as opposed to only those records held by non-judicial agencies subject to the PIA – additional concerns then arise regarding the First Amendment, government transparency and accountability, and the public’s right to access judicial proceedings.

Personal privacy and safety concerns should never be minimized or ignored. While the events that led to the introduction of Senate Bill 426 were alarming, the legislation’s impact of essentially closing all divorce records is too heavy handed and could have the unintended consequence of curtailing public oversight of additional types of legal cases and judicial rulings in the future. A thorough case-by-case examination of safety concerns provides a more balanced approach to respecting the competing interests of an individual’s right to privacy and the public’s right to information.

While I support the intent of this legislation – keeping people safe by protecting their personal privacy – I am concerned by the bill’s redundancy and interpretive challenges, as well as potential confusion while attempting to implement its provisions. In the meantime, this important issue deserves a closer look. I encourage all parties to collaborate during the interim and strive toward finding a more balanced and workable solution.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Senate Bill 426.

Sincerely,

Wes Moore
Governor

Senate Bill 426

AN ACT concerning

Public Information Act – Divorce Records

FOR the purpose of requiring a custodian to deny inspection of certain records pertaining to a divorce proceeding; and generally relating to divorce records and the Public Information Act.

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
Article – General Provisions
Section 4–101(a), (b), (d), (f), and (g)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2019 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY adding to
Article – General Provisions
Section 4–305.1
Annotated Code of Maryland

(2019 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – General Provisions

4–101.

(a) In this title the following words have the meanings indicated.

(b) “Applicant” means a person or governmental unit that asks to inspect a public record.

(d) “Custodian” means:

(1) the official custodian; or

(2) any other authorized individual who has physical custody and control of a public record.

(f) “Official custodian” means an officer or employee of the State or of a political subdivision who is responsible for keeping a public record, whether or not the officer or employee has physical custody and control of the public record.

(g) “Person in interest” means:

(1) a person or governmental unit that is the subject of a public record or a designee of the person or governmental unit;

(2) if the person has a legal disability, the parent or legal representative of the person; or

(3) as to requests for correction of certificates of death under § 5–310(d)(2) of the Health – General Article, the spouse, adult child, parent, adult sibling, grandparent, or guardian of the person of the deceased at the time of the deceased’s death.

4–305.1.

(A) THIS SECTION DOES NOT APPLY TO A FINAL DECREE IN A DIVORCE PROCEEDING.

(B) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION, A CUSTODIAN SHALL DENY INSPECTION OF A RECORD PERTAINING TO A DIVORCE PROCEEDING, INCLUDING:

- (1) AN APPLICATION FOR DIVORCE;
 - (2) A FINANCIAL RECORD SUBMITTED AS PART OF A DIVORCE PROCEEDING;
 - (3) A RECORD OF A DIVORCE SETTLEMENT; AND
 - (4) A CUSTODY ORDER.
- (C) A CUSTODIAN SHALL RELEASE A RECORD PERTAINING TO A DIVORCE PROCEEDING TO AN APPLICANT WHO:
- (1) IS A PERSON IN INTEREST;
 - (2) IS A LAWYER REPRESENTING A PERSON IN INTEREST; OR
 - (3) HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED UNDER A COURT ORDER TO INSPECT THE RECORD.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2026.

May 22, 2026

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

Dear President Ferguson:,

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I have vetoed Senate Bill 448 – *Carroll County – Public Facilities Bond*.

This bill authorizes the Carroll County Commissioners to issue up to \$27.0 million in general obligation bonds for the acquisition, construction, improvement, or renovation of public buildings, facilities, and public works projects. House Bill 927, which was passed by the General Assembly and signed by me, accomplishes the same purpose.

Although both bills are legally sufficient, only one should be signed, as enactment of duplicate bond bills would double the authorized debt.

Sincerely,

Wes Moore
Governor

Senate Bill 448

AN ACT concerning

Carroll County – Public Facilities Bond

FOR the purpose of authorizing and empowering the County Commissioners of Carroll County, from time to time, to borrow not more than \$27,000,000 in order to finance the construction, improvement, or development of certain public facilities in Carroll County, including water and sewer projects, to finance loans for fire or emergency–related equipment, buildings, and other facilities of volunteer fire departments in the County, and to effect such borrowing by the issuance and sale at public or private sale of its general obligation bonds in like par amount; empowering the County to fix and determine, by resolution, the form, tenor, interest rate or rates or method of determining the same, terms, conditions, maturities, and all other details incident to the issuance and sale of the bonds; empowering the County to issue refunding bonds for the purchase or redemption of bonds in advance of maturity; providing that such borrowing may be undertaken by the County in the form of installment purchase obligations executed and delivered by the County for the purpose of acquiring agricultural land and woodland preservation easements; empowering and directing the County to levy, impose, and collect, annually, ad valorem taxes in rate and amount sufficient to provide funds for the payment of the maturing principal of and interest on the bonds; exempting the bonds and refunding bonds and the interest thereon and any income derived therefrom from all State, County, municipal, and other taxation in the State of Maryland; providing that nothing in this Act shall prevent the County from authorizing the issuance and sale of bonds the interest on which is not excludable from gross income for federal income tax purposes; and generally relating to the issuance and sale of such bonds.

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That, as used herein, the term “County” means the body politic and corporate of the State of Maryland known as the County Commissioners of Carroll County, and the term “construction, improvement, or development of public facilities” means the acquisition, alteration, construction, reconstruction, enlargement, equipping, expansion, extension, improvement, rehabilitation, renovation, upgrading, and repair of public buildings and facilities and public works projects, including, but not limited to, public works projects such as roads, bridges and storm drains, public school buildings and facilities, landfills, Carroll Community College buildings and facilities, public operational buildings and facilities such as buildings and facilities for County administrative use, public safety, health and social services, libraries, refuse disposal buildings and facilities, water and sewer infrastructure facilities, easements or similar or related rights in land that restrict the use of agricultural land or woodland to maintain the character of the land as agricultural land or woodland,

and parks and recreation buildings and facilities, together with the costs of acquiring land or interests in land as well as any related architectural, financial, legal, planning, or engineering services.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the County is hereby authorized to finance any part or all of the costs of the construction, improvements, or development of public facilities described in Section 1 of this Act, to make loans to each and every volunteer fire department in the County upon such terms and conditions as may be determined by the County for the purpose of financing certain fire or emergency–related equipment, buildings, or other facilities of volunteer fire departments, and to borrow money and incur indebtedness for those purposes, at one time or from time to time, in an amount not exceeding, in the aggregate, \$27,000,000 and to evidence such borrowing by the issuance and sale upon its full faith and credit of general obligation bonds in like par amount, which may be issued at one time or from time to time, in one or more groups or series, as the County may determine.

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the bonds shall be issued in accordance with a resolution of the County, which shall describe generally the construction, improvement, or development of public facilities, including water and sewer projects, the fire or emergency–related equipment, buildings, or other facilities of volunteer fire departments in the County for which the proceeds of the bond sale are intended and the amount needed for those purposes. The County shall have and is hereby granted full and complete authority and discretion in the resolution to fix and determine with respect to the bonds of any issue: the designation, date of issue, denomination or denominations, form or forms, and tenor of the bonds which, without limitation, may be issued in registered form within the meaning of § 19–204 of the Local Government Article, as amended; the rate or rates of interest payable thereon, or the method of determining the same, which may include a variable rate; the date or dates and amount or amounts of maturity, which need not be in equal par amounts or in consecutive annual installments, provided only that no bond of any issue shall mature later than 30 years from the date of its issue; the manner of selling the bonds, which may be at either public or private sale, for such price or prices as may be determined to be for the best interests of Carroll County; the manner of executing and sealing the bonds, which may be by facsimile; the terms and conditions of any loans made to volunteer fire departments; the terms and conditions, if any, under which bonds may be tendered for payment or purchase prior to their stated maturity; the terms or conditions, if any, under which bonds may or shall be redeemed prior to their stated maturity; the place or places of payment of the principal of and the interest on the bonds, which may be at any bank or trust company within or without the State of Maryland; covenants relating to compliance with applicable requirements of federal income tax law, including (without limitation) covenants regarding the payment of rebate or penalties in lieu of rebate; covenants relating to compliance with applicable requirements of federal or State securities laws; and generally all matters incident to the terms, conditions, issuance, sale, and delivery thereof.

The bonds may be made redeemable before maturity, at the option of the County, at such price or prices and under such terms and conditions as may be fixed by the County prior to the issuance of the bonds, either in the resolution or in subsequent resolutions. The

bonds may be issued in registered form, and provision may be made for the registration of the principal only. In case any officer whose signature appears on any bond ceases to be such officer before the delivery thereof, such signature shall nevertheless be valid and sufficient for all purposes as if the officer had remained in office until such delivery. The bonds and the issuance and sale thereof shall be exempt from the provisions of §§ 19–205 and 19–206 of the Local Government Article, as amended.

The borrowing authorized by this Act may also be undertaken by the County in the form of installment purchase obligations executed and delivered by the County for the purpose of acquiring easements or similar or related rights in land that restrict the use of agricultural land or woodland to maintain the character of the land as agricultural or woodland. The form of installment purchase obligations, the manner of accomplishing the acquisition of easements, which may be the direct exchange of installment purchase obligations for easement, and all matters incident to the execution and delivery of the installment purchase obligations and acquisition of the easements by the County shall be determined in the resolution. Except where the provisions of this Act would be inapplicable to installment purchase obligations, the term “bonds” used in this Act shall include installment purchase obligations and matters pertaining to the bonds under this Act, such as the security for the payment of the bonds, the exemption of the bonds from State, County, municipal, or other taxation, and authorization to issue refunding bonds and the limitation on the aggregate principal amount of bonds authorized for issuance, shall be applicable to installment purchase obligations.

The County may enter into agreements with agents, banks, fiduciaries, insurers, or others for the purpose of enhancing the marketability of any security for the bonds and for the purpose of securing any tender option that may be granted to holders of the bonds, all as may be determined and presented in the aforesaid resolution, which may (but need not) state as security for the performance by the County of any monetary obligations under such agreements the same security given by the County to bondholders for the performance by the County of its monetary obligations under the bonds.

If the County determines in the resolution to offer any of the bonds by solicitation of competitive bids at public sale, the resolution shall fix the terms and conditions of the public sale and shall adopt a form of notice of sale, which shall outline the terms and conditions, and a form of advertisement, which shall be published in one or more daily or weekly newspapers having a general circulation in the County and which may also be published in one or more journals having a circulation primarily among banks and investment bankers. At least one publication of the advertisement shall be made not less than 10 days before the sale of the bonds.

Upon delivery of any bonds to the purchaser or purchasers, payment therefor shall be made to the Comptroller of Carroll County or such other official of Carroll County as may be designated to receive such payment in a resolution passed by the County before such delivery.

SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the net proceeds of the sale of bonds shall be used and applied exclusively and solely for the acquisition, construction,

improvement, or development of public facilities, including water and sewer projects, to make loans to volunteer fire departments for the financing of fire or emergency–related equipment, buildings, or other facilities of volunteer fire departments in the County for which the bonds are sold. If the amounts borrowed shall prove inadequate to finance the projects described in the resolution, the County may issue additional bonds with the limitations hereof for the purpose of evidencing the borrowing of additional funds for such financing, provided the resolution authorizing the sale of additional bonds shall so recite, but if the net proceeds of the sale of any issue of bonds exceed the amount needed to finance the projects described in the resolution, the excess funds so borrowed and not expended shall be applied to the payment of the next principal maturity of the bonds or to the redemption of any part of the bonds which have been made redeemable or to the purchase and cancellation of bonds, unless the County shall adopt a resolution allocating the excess funds to the acquisition, construction, improvement, or development of other public facilities, including water and sewer projects, or to the making of loans for fire or emergency–related equipment, buildings, or other facilities of volunteer fire departments in the County, as defined and within the limits set forth in this Act.

SECTION 5. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the bonds hereby authorized shall constitute, and they shall so recite, an irrevocable pledge of the full faith and credit and unlimited taxing power of the County to the payment of the maturing principal of and interest on the bonds as and when they become payable. In each and every fiscal year that any of the bonds are outstanding, the County shall levy or cause to be levied ad valorem taxes upon all the assessable property within the corporate limits of the County in rate and amount sufficient to provide for or assure the payment, when due, of the principal of and interest on all the bonds maturing in each such fiscal year and, in the event the proceeds from the taxes so levied in any such fiscal year shall prove inadequate for such payment, additional taxes shall be levied in the succeeding fiscal year to make up any such deficiency. The County may apply to the payment of the principal of and interest on any bonds issued hereunder any funds received by it as loan repayments from volunteer fire departments and any funds received by it from the State of Maryland, the United States of America, any agency or instrumentality thereof, or from any other source, if such funds are granted for the purpose of assisting the County in financing the acquisition, construction, improvement, or development of the public facilities defined in this Act, including the water and sewer projects or the making of loans for the aforementioned fire or emergency–related equipment, buildings, or other facilities for volunteer fire departments in the County and, to the extent of any such funds received or receivable in any fiscal year, the taxes that are required to be levied may be reduced accordingly.

SECTION 6. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the County is further authorized and empowered, at any time and from time to time, to issue its bonds in the manner herein above described for the purpose of refunding, by payment at maturity or upon purchase or redemption, any bonds issued hereunder. The validity of any such refunding bonds shall in no way be dependent upon or related to the validity or invalidity of the obligations so refunded. The powers herein granted with respect to the issuance of bonds shall be applicable to the issuance of refunding bonds. Such refunding bonds may be issued by the County for the purpose of providing it with funds to pay any of its outstanding bonds issued hereunder at maturity, for the purpose of providing it with funds to purchase

in the open market any of its outstanding bonds issued hereunder, prior to the maturity thereof, or for the purpose of providing it with funds for the redemption prior to maturity of any outstanding bonds issued hereunder which are, by their terms, redeemable, for the purpose of providing it with funds to pay interest on any outstanding bonds issued hereunder prior to their payment at maturity of purchase or redemption in advance of maturity, or for the purpose of providing it with funds to pay any redemption or purchase premium in connection with the refunding of any of its outstanding bonds issued hereunder. The proceeds of the sale of any such refunding bonds shall be segregated and set apart by the County as a separate trust fund to be used solely for the purpose of paying the purchase or redemption prices of the bonds to be refunded.

SECTION 7. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the County may, prior to the preparation of definitive bonds, issue interim certificates or temporary bonds, exchangeable for definitive bonds when such bonds have been executed and are available for such delivery, provided, however, that any such interim certificates or temporary bonds shall be issued in all respects subject to the restrictions and requirements set forth in this Act. The County may, by appropriate resolution, provide for the replacement of any bonds issued hereunder which shall have become mutilated or lost or destroyed upon such conditions and after receiving such indemnity as the County may require.

SECTION 8. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That any and all obligations issued pursuant to the authority of this Act, their transfer, the interest payable thereon, and any income derived therefrom in the hands of the holders thereof from time to time (including any profit made in the sale thereof) shall be and are hereby declared to be at all times exempt from State, County, municipal, or other taxation of every kind and nature whatsoever within the State of Maryland. Nothing in this Act shall prevent the County from authorizing the issuance and sale of bonds the interest on which is not excludable from gross income for federal income tax purposes.

SECTION 9. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the authority to borrow money and issue bonds conferred on the County by this Act shall be deemed to provide an additional and alternative authority for borrowing money and shall be regarded as supplemental and additional to powers conferred upon the County by other laws and shall not be regarded as in derogation of any power now existing; and all Acts of the General Assembly of Maryland heretofore passed authorizing the County to borrow money are hereby continued to the extent that the powers contained in such Acts have not been exercised, and nothing contained in this Act may be construed to impair, in any way, the validity of any bonds that may have been issued by the County under the authority of any said Acts, and the validity of the bonds is hereby ratified, confirmed, and approved. This Act, being necessary for the welfare of the inhabitants of Carroll County, shall be liberally construed to effect the purposes hereof. All Acts and parts of Acts inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.

SECTION 10. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June 1, 2026.

May 22, 2026

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

Dear President Ferguson,

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I hereby veto Senate Bill 459 – *Procurement – Advertising – Maryland News Organizations (Local News for Maryland Communities Act of 2026)*.

Senate Bill 459 aims to support Maryland’s local journalism ecosystem by requiring that at least 50% of a procurement unit’s total dollar value of contracts for advertising be directed to Maryland news organizations, with the exception of advertising whose primary audience is outside the State and for the purpose of promoting Maryland tourism or supporting employee recruitment or economic investment.

I commend the Maryland General Assembly, and Senator Rosapepe and Delegate Foley in particular, for their sustained commitment to supporting Maryland’s local journalism. Local news organizations provide a diversity of thought and perspective essential to an informed citizenry, and their role as an independent check on government and private conduct, through both routine and investigative reporting, is a public good that my Administration values. It is precisely because my Administration shares the goal of a healthy and sustainable local news ecosystem that I have given this legislation careful and serious consideration. However, after that consideration, I have determined that Senate Bill 459, as written, would significantly impair the state’s ability to communicate effectively with Maryland residents.

The State and its agencies have a fundamental obligation to deliver critical information to Marylanders through the most effective and efficient means available. Meeting that obligation requires access to a full range of modern advertising channels, including digital platforms, streaming services, outdoor media, and partnerships with major regional organizations, which allow the State to reach a broad and diverse audience where they receive their information. By mandating that half of all advertising contract dollars be directed to Maryland news organizations, Senate Bill 459 severely restricts the state’s ability to utilize these effective channels.

This concern is compounded by the prevalence of subscription paywalls among local news organizations that are increasingly reliant on the electronic delivery of news as the availability of print media declines. A mandate directing State advertising funds to outlets whose contents are accessible only to paying subscribers does not serve the State’s interest in reaching the broadest possible audience. Marylanders who do not subscribe to a given outlet will not see the State’s message regardless of how much the State spends to place it

there. Effective public communication requires that the State's advertising investment generate a measurable return in reach, engagement, and delivery to the communities that need it most. In addition, a news outlet's identity should be anchored by its geography. When a publication is owned by a multi-state or national media conglomerate, its editorial priorities, staffing and financial decisions may reflect goals that are far from the communities they serve. State resources intended to support local journalism should be directed towards outlets rooted in and accountable to Maryland communities, not multi-state ownership structures.

The legislation also creates financial risk for the State. Mandating a significant share of advertising funds to organizations without regard to their proven standards of accuracy, accountability, and return on investment exposes the State to the expenditure of public dollars in ways that cannot be adequately justified to Maryland taxpayers. The State's advertising contracts must be governed by the same principles of performance and accountability that apply across all areas of state procurement.

The fiscal consequence of this mandate is clear. If enacted, Senate Bill 459 would force the State into an untenable choice: increase its overall advertising budget to maintain current levels of reach and effectiveness or reduce its advertising reach to remain within existing budget constraints. It is my assessment that neither outcome serves the public interest. The first places an unnecessary and unbudgeted burden on State resources. The second diminishes the state's ability to communicate with Marylanders.

My Administration looks forward to working with the General Assembly, sponsors of the legislation, and all relevant stakeholders to pursue executive actions or potential legislation in the 2027 session that supports local journalism in a manner that is feasible, fiscally sound, and consistent with the State's obligations to all Marylanders it serves. This includes a particular focus on local news outlets that inform and empower underserved communities, those who are most often affected by the loss of reliable community-based reporting. Ensuring these voices are heard and these communities are served remains a core priority in any framework that we develop.

For these reasons provided in this letter, I have vetoed Senate Bill 459.

Sincerely,

Wes Moore
Governor

Senate Bill 459

AN ACT concerning

**Procurement – Advertising – ~~Local~~ Maryland News Organizations
(~~Local Newspapers~~ News for Maryland Communities Act of 2026)**

FOR the purpose of requiring a unit of State government to ensure that at least a certain amount of the unit’s total dollar value of procurement contracts for ~~print and digital~~ advertising is being made directly to ~~local~~ Maryland news organizations; authorizing a unit of State government to consult with a certain organization under certain circumstances; and generally relating to procurement contracts made to ~~local~~ Maryland news organizations.

BY adding to
Article – State Finance and Procurement
Section 14–419
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – State Finance and Procurement

14–419.

(A) (1) IN THIS SECTION, “~~LOCAL~~ MARYLAND NEWS ORGANIZATION” MEANS AN ENTITY THAT:

(I) ENGAGES PROFESSIONALS TO CREATE, EDIT, PRODUCE, AND DISTRIBUTE ORIGINAL CONTENT CONCERNING MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST THROUGH REPORTING, CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS, OBSERVING CURRENT EVENTS, OR ANALYZING INFORMATION;

(II) HAS AT LEAST ONE FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT EMPLOYEE WHO:

1. ~~IS EMPLOYED FULL TIME;~~

~~2.~~ IS DEDICATED TO PROVIDING COVERAGE OF EVENTS IN MARYLAND; AND

~~3.~~ 2. RESIDES IN MARYLAND OR WITHIN 50 MILES OF MARYLAND;

(III) IN THE CASE OF A PRINT PUBLICATION, HAS PUBLISHED AT LEAST ONE PRINT PUBLICATION PER MONTH OVER THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS AND:

1. HOLDS A VALID U.S. POSTAL SERVICE PERIODICAL PERMIT; OR

2. HAS AT LEAST 25% OF ITS CONTENT DEDICATED TO ~~LOCAL~~ MARYLAND NEWS;

(IV) IN THE CASE OF AN ENTITY THAT PUBLISHES CONTENT ONLY IN DIGITAL FORM:

1. HAS PUBLISHED AT LEAST ONE PIECE ABOUT EVENTS IN MARYLAND PER WEEK OVER THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS; AND

2. FOR WHICH AT LEAST 33% OF ITS AUDIENCE, AVERAGED OVER A 12-MONTH PERIOD, IS LOCATED IN MARYLAND;

(V) HAS DISCLOSED, IN ITS PRINT PUBLICATION OR ON ITS WEBSITE:

1. ITS BENEFICIAL OWNERS; OR

2. IN THE CASE OF A NONPROFIT ENTITY, ITS BOARD OF DIRECTORS; ~~AND~~

(VI) IN THE CASE OF AN ENTITY THAT MAINTAINS TAX STATUS UNDER § 501(C)(3) OF THE INTERNAL REVENUE CODE, AND IS NOT AN ENTITY DESCRIBED IN ITEM (III) OR (IV) OF THIS PARAGRAPH:

1. HAS DECLARED COVERAGE OF ~~LOCAL OR STATE~~ MARYLAND NEWS AS ITS STATED MISSION IN A FILING WITH THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE; OR

2. HAS RECEIVED A COMMUNITY SERVICE GRANT FROM THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING PRIOR TO 2026; AND

(VII) AN ENTITY THAT:

1. IS A BROADCAST STATION AS DEFINED UNDER SECTION 3 OF THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS ACT OF 1934; AND

2. HAS A COMMUNITY LICENSE IN MARYLAND ASSIGNED BY THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION.

(2) “~~LOCAL~~ MARYLAND NEWS ORGANIZATION” DOES NOT INCLUDE AN ENTITY THAT RECEIVES MORE THAN 50% OF ITS GROSS RECEIPTS FROM:

(I) A POLITICAL ORGANIZATION DESCRIBED IN 26 U.S.C. § 527;

OR

(II) ANY ORGANIZATION THAT MAINTAINS STATUS UNDER 26 U.S.C. § 501(C)(4), (5), OR (6).

(B) THIS SECTION DOES NOT APPLY TO ANY PROCUREMENT CONTRACT FOR ~~PRINT OR DIGITAL~~ ADVERTISING ~~TO BE PUBLISHED OR BROADCAST~~ WITH THE PRIMARY AUDIENCE FOCUS OUTSIDE OF MARYLAND FOR THE PURPOSES OF:

- (1) PROMOTING TOURISM TO THE STATE; ~~OR~~
- (2) EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT; OR
- (3) ECONOMIC INVESTMENT.

(C) (1) A UNIT SHALL STRUCTURE PROCUREMENT PROCEDURES TO ACHIEVE AN OVERALL GOAL OF 50% OF THE UNIT'S TOTAL DOLLAR VALUE OF PROCUREMENT CONTRACTS FOR ~~PRINT OR DIGITAL~~ ADVERTISING BEING MADE DIRECTLY TO ~~LOCAL~~ MARYLAND NEWS ORGANIZATIONS.

(2) A UNIT SHALL PRIORITIZE THE USE OF MARYLAND NEWS ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE A PRIMARY MISSION OF REPORTING ON AND SERVING UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES IN MARYLAND.

(D) A UNIT MAY CONSULT WITH A THIRD-PARTY NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION TO PREPARE AND MAINTAIN A LIST OF ELIGIBLE LOCAL NEWS ORGANIZATIONS UNDER THIS SECTION.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2026.

Vetoed House Bills and Messages

May 22, 2026

The Honorable Joseline Peña–Melnik
Speaker of the House of Delegates of Maryland
H–101 State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Speaker Peña–Melnik,

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I hereby veto House Bill 862 – *Railroads– Required Crew for Movement of Freight*.

The primary aim of House Bill 862 is to establish safety requirements for freight trains operating in Maryland by mandating a minimum of two crew members and creating a civil penalty structure for willful violation of up to \$10,000 for a first offense and up to \$25,000 for subsequent violations within three years. The legislation further conditions its enactment upon the passage of similar legislation in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

I commend the Maryland General Assembly’s commitment to the safety of railroad workers and the communities through which freight trains operate. My Administration shares the same goal of safety and ensuring adequate crew standards on Maryland’s rail lines. However, after careful consideration, I have determined that this legislation is not the appropriate vehicle for achieving that goal.

The central legal deficiency of House Bill 862 is that it conflicts with controlling federal law. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued a final rule in 2024 establishing a nationwide two–person crew standard for freight operations (Docket No. FRA–2021–0032, Notice No. 5). This sets minimum crew size requirements for all freight trains, establishing a risk assessment process for railroads seeking a waiver for one–person operations, and permits exceptions only where one–person crews present no significant safety risks to employees, the public, or the environment. Under 49 U.S.C. § 20106(a) of the Federal Railroad Safety Act, a state law is preempted when the Secretary of Transportation prescribes a regulation covering the subject matter of that law. A state may adopt a more stringent standard only if it addresses an essentially local safety hazard, is not incompatible with federal requirements, and does not unreasonably burden interstate commerce. It is the Administration’s assessment, with the advice of the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), that the FRA’s 2024 final rule appears to preempt House Bill 862. This conclusion holds even as the final rule remains subject to ongoing federal litigation.

The legislation’s contingency clause presents an independent and compounding legal concern. The OAG advised that conditioning Maryland legislation on the passage of substantially similar laws in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, raises serious questions of preemption under the Regional Rail Reorganization Act of 1973 (3R Act).

Specifically, the OAG has cautioned that the contingency clause may increase the risk that a reviewing court may find the bill was enacted with an economic purpose rather than safety, the type of finding that supports a determination of preemption under the 3R Act.

House Bill 862 also creates a significant, unbudgeted fiscal burden on the State. The 2021 Access Agreement between the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) and CSX authorizes MARC Train service on the Camden and Brunswick lines and contains a provision that could be triggered by any Maryland law mandating increased minimum crew sizes on freight operations. If enacted, this legislation could require MTA to reimburse CSX up to \$6.0 million annually, an unbudgeted expense that would fall on Maryland's already constrained Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) and jeopardize the State's capacity to fund priority investments, including the Penn–Camden Connector. Beyond the MTA–CSX agreement, state freight and contract–operating railroads, including the Canton Railroad Company and Maryland and Delaware Railroad, are estimated to incur over \$1.3 million in additional annual operating costs as a direct result of this legislation, costs that would likely be passed on to the State.

The safety of railroad workers, both in Maryland and nationally, is a matter of serious consequence, and it deserves a sustainable solution. House Bill 862, however well–intentioned, would likely be rendered unenforceable by federal preemption, exposes the State to additional constitutional risk through its contingency structure, and imposes a significant unbudgeted fiscal burden at a time when Maryland's resources must be directed toward its highest priorities.

I look forward to working with the General Assembly and all relevant stakeholders to continue to make progress on this important issue and keep Maryland safe. However, for these reasons provided in this letter, I have vetoed House Bill 862.

Sincerely,

Wes Moore
Governor

House Bill 862

AN ACT concerning

Railroads – Required Crew for Movement of Freight

FOR the purpose of prohibiting a railroad train used in connection with the movement of freight from being operated in the State unless it has a certain number of crew members; and generally relating to safety requirements for railroads.

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
Article – Labor and Employment
Section 5.5–101(a), (d), and (e)
Annotated Code of Maryland

(2025 Replacement Volume)

BY adding to

Article – Labor and Employment
 Section 5.5–110(e)
 Annotated Code of Maryland
 (2025 Replacement Volume)

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

Article – Transportation
 Section 21–101(a) and (r)
 Annotated Code of Maryland
 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Labor and Employment

5.5–101.

(a) In this title the following words have the meanings indicated.

(d) (1) “Railroad” includes each common carrier by rail and all branches, bridges, cars, extensions, ferries, plants, spurs, stations, subways, switches, terminal facilities, tracks, tunnels, and all equipment used on or in connection with them.

(2) “Railroad” does not include a rapid rail transit system or light rail system operating in the State.

(e) “Railroad company” means:

(1) the operator of a railroad operating in the State; and

(2) the State or any political subdivision of the State, while operating a railroad.

5.5–110.

(E) (1) IN THIS SECTION, “RAILROAD TRAIN” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN § 21–101 OF THE TRANSPORTATION ARTICLE.

(2) (I) THIS SUBSECTION APPLIES TO A RAILROAD TRAIN USED IN CONNECTION WITH THE MOVEMENT OF RAILROAD FREIGHT THAT SHARES THE SAME RAIL CORRIDOR AS A HIGH–SPEED PASSENGER OR COMMUTER TRAIN.

(II) THIS SUBSECTION DOES NOT APPLY TO A RAILROAD TRAIN USED IN CONNECTION WITH THE MOVEMENT OF RAILROAD FREIGHT INVOLVING:

- 1. HOSTLER SERVICE; OR**
- 2. UTILITY EMPLOYEES IN YARD SERVICE.**

(3) A RAILROAD TRAIN USED IN CONNECTION WITH THE MOVEMENT OF RAILROAD FREIGHT MAY NOT BE OPERATED IN THE STATE UNLESS THE RAILROAD TRAIN HAS A CREW OF AT LEAST TWO INDIVIDUALS.

(4) (I) SUBJECT TO SUBPARAGRAPH (II) OF THIS PARAGRAPH, A PERSON WHO WILLFULLY VIOLATES THIS SUBSECTION IS SUBJECT TO A CIVIL PENALTY ASSESSED BY THE COMMISSIONER OF:

- 1. EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN ITEM 2 OF THIS SUBPARAGRAPH, A FINE NOT TO EXCEED \$10,000; OR**
- 2. IF THE PERSON PREVIOUSLY COMMITTED A WILLFUL VIOLATION WITHIN THE IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING 3 YEARS, A FINE NOT TO EXCEED \$25,000.**

(II) A RAILROAD COMPANY SHALL BE SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIONS OF THE AGENTS OR EMPLOYEES OF THE RAILROAD COMPANY THAT VIOLATE THIS SUBSECTION.

Article – Transportation

21–101.

(a) In this title and Title 25 of this article the following words have the meanings indicated.

(r) “Railroad train” means any locomotive or any other car, rolling stock, equipment, or other device that, alone or coupled to others, is operated on stationary rails.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

(a) Section 1 of this Act shall take effect contingent on the enacting of substantially similar legislation in the State of New York, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

(b) The Maryland Department of Labor shall notify the Department of Legislative Services within 10 days after the contingency described in subsection (a) of this section is met.

(c) If the Department of Legislative Services receives notice under subsection (b) of this section on or before October 1, 2056, Section 1 of this Act shall take effect on the date notice is received.

(d) If the Department of Legislative Services does not receive notice under subsection (b) of this section on or before October 1, 2056, Section 1 of this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be null and void.

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That, subject to Section 2 of this Act, this Act shall take effect October 1, 2026.

May 22, 2026

The Honorable Joseline Peña–Melnyk
Speaker of the House of Delegates
H–101 State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Speaker Peña–Melnyk,

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I hereby veto House Bill 1151 – *Maryland Department of Health – Study on Maryland Medical Assistance Program Reimbursement of Hospice Room and Board Services*.

House Bill 1151 requires the Maryland Health Care Commission and the Maryland Medicaid Program to jointly study the impact of requiring Medicaid to provide reimbursement for room and board services provided by a hospice house. By December 1, 2026, the Maryland Department of Health must report its findings to specified committees of the General Assembly.

While I understand the bill sponsor’s goal of identifying opportunities to improve hospice patient outcomes, the letter of concern submitted by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the fiscal and policy note for the bill identify that federal law prohibits Medicaid reimbursement for room and board outside of a facility setting. Therefore, coverage of room and board services delivered by hospice houses would require 100% state general funds since they are not eligible for federal matching dollars. MDH estimates this cost would exceed \$8 million annually, with the likelihood that utilization would grow with Medicaid coverage.

Health costs account for more than one–third of the state’s annual operating budget, and state investment in the Medicaid program alone has grown by more than half a billion dollars under this administration. The state has continued to face deficiency appropriation needs for health programs, and my administration has worked in partnership with the

budget committees to manage utilization and cost increases for Medicaid, the Developmental Disabilities Administration, and the Behavioral Health Administration. At the same time, as the department indicated during the Medicaid 101 briefing this session, we anticipate the state could face a loss of up to \$2.7 billion in federal funding to Medicaid as a result of H.R. 1.

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 and delivered on key commitments while maintaining fiscal discipline. In this fiscal climate, we must reconsider bills that commit the state to future obligations and remain disciplined and strategic in funding decisions to protect essential services for all Marylanders. Rather than conducting the study of expanded Medicaid coverage this bill would have required, MDH will instead work with the bill sponsor during the interim to identify alternative ways of improving hospice patient outcomes.

For the reasons provided in this letter, I have vetoed House Bill 1151.

Sincerely,

Wes Moore
Governor

House Bill 1151

AN ACT concerning

Maryland Department of Health – Study on Maryland Medical Assistance Program Reimbursement of Hospice Room and Board Services

FOR the purpose of requiring the ~~Division of Health Care Financing and Medicaid within the Maryland Department of Health~~ Maryland Health Care Commission and the Maryland Medical Assistance Program jointly to study the impact of requiring the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide reimbursement for room and board services provided by a hospice house; and generally relating to a study of reimbursement for hospice room and board services under the Maryland Medical Assistance Program.

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
That:

(a) The ~~Division of Health Care Financing and Medicaid within the Maryland Department of Health~~ Maryland Health Care Commission and the Maryland Medical Assistance Program jointly shall study the impact of requiring the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide reimbursement for room and board services provided by a hospice house, as defined in COMAR 10.07.22.02.

(b) The study required under subsection (a) of this section shall:

(1) ~~quantify~~ analyze overall Maryland Medical Assistance Program savings per enrollee death ~~as a result of the use of hospice care; and~~ associated with hospice care utilization during the last 6 months of life compared with costs associated with other services provided to Program enrollees during the last 6 months of life, including the impact on:

- (i) avoided inpatient hospital stays;
- (ii) emergency department utilization; and
- (iii) intensive treatments near the end of life;

(2) analyze the projected fiscal impact of the provision of reimbursement for hospice house room and board services, including any potential offsets or net savings;

(3) examine how the provision of reimbursement for room and board services would:

- (i) affect ~~hospice~~ hospital readmission rates;
- (ii) improve hospice length of stay;
- (iii) improve early access to hospice services;
- (iv) result in a reduction in deaths in hospitals; and
- ~~(iv)~~ (v) result in a reduction in emergency department utilization; and

(4) include a comparison of other states that provide reimbursement for hospice house room and board service, including a comparison of:

- (i) payment models;
- (ii) utilization outcomes; and
- (iii) cost impacts.

(c) On or before ~~September 30~~ December 1, 2026, the Maryland Department of Health shall report its findings to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Health Committee, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

