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Maryland Lawmakers Fall Short on Legislative Report Card

ROCKVILLE, MD (August 20, 2018) – The Maryland Public Policy Institute today released its report card for the pivotal 2018 Maryland legislative session, which concluded in April. Lawmakers earned poor marks across the board, punctuated by bloated spending, corporate favoritism, and failure to enact meaningful public education reform. The full report can be viewed at mdpolicy.org.

“Maryland lawmakers put their own pet projects and the administrative state ahead of the interests of Maryland taxpayers, families, and small businesses,” said Christopher B. Summers, president and chief executive officer of the Institute. “We hope Maryland residents remind their elected representatives this year that the best way to tackle Maryland’s challenges is through broad-based economic opportunity for all – not bigger government.”

Grades from the Annapolis Report include:

Education – Grade: F

The General Assembly passed several flawed bills that would negatively impact Maryland’s public schools. With the state election just a few months away, the session mainly focused on topics that could be tailored to campaign ads, such as funding for pre-kindergarten. Meanwhile, legislators did not address the fact that annual spending increases for the state’s public education are tightly squeezing other budget areas. In addition to adopting a record \$6.6 billion budget for education, they allocated an additional \$200 million for future expenses to implement the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission. Given their mediocre track record in the past years, it is also no surprise that legislators also paid little attention to charter schools, school choice, or innovating Maryland’s education sector.

Budget – Grade: C

The 2018 session produced mixed results for the state’s budget. In a story that repeats itself each year, legislators passed bills allowing future ongoing spending to exceed ongoing revenue. Therefore, a structural deficit is expected to return in FY 2020 and persist afterwards. Overall, legislators failed to tackle key issues that have plagued Maryland for years: excessive spending and a long-term structural deficit.

Taxes – Grade: C

Legislators once again focused on providing targeted tax incentives to favored groups. Maryland’s history of corporate welfare peaked this year with the Promoting extraordinary Innovation in Maryland’s Economy Act, which would provide subsidies to Amazon if that company chooses to build its second headquarters in Maryland. Meanwhile, only limited tax relief was provided for individuals negatively affected by the Federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 and small businesses affected by the paid sick leave law.

Economy – Grade: D

State policymakers continued with their usual preference for programs favoring corporate welfare during the 2018 legislative session. The proposal to give \$5.6 billion in handouts to Amazon is merely the latest example of the prevalent mentality in Annapolis that aims to grow the state’s economy by subsidizing politically-connected businesses or industries.

View the full report at mdpolicy.org.

About the Maryland Public Policy Institute: Founded in 2001, the Maryland Public Policy Institute is a nonpartisan public policy research and education organization that focuses on state policy issues. The Institute’s mission is to formulate and promote public policies at all levels of government based on principles of free enterprise, limited government, and civil society. Learn more at mdpolicy.org.

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