

Colleagues and Staff of the Maryland Senate:

Thank you for your consistent hard work on behalf of your constituents, especially in these incredibly trying times. The COVID-19 crisis has showcased for the public and the press the incredible work you do on behalf of our shared constituents on issues ranging from healthcare to unemployment insurance, evictions, utilities, and more. You have done this work, and the work preparing for the 2021 Session, with personal issues, and with a cloud of uncertainty hanging over us all.

As you are aware, over this interim, my staff and I have met with Senators, staff, public health professionals, airflow experts, stakeholders in the Senate, and many others to determine the best method to proceed for the upcoming 2021 General Assembly Session. These decisions have not been easy. Today, I am recommending a framework for our operations that seeks to balance the health of Senators, staff, and the public, with the need for Maryland's legislative branch to function during a pandemic as a co-equal branch of government. Further, under these circumstances our altered operations must be transparent, maintain the highest quality work product possible, and ensure the ongoing trust and respect of our constituents.

The need to balance these competing interests means that we are guaranteed a world in which no single interest is completely satisfied. We are unable to create a Session that eliminates the risk of COVID-19 transmission. We will, though, take as many steps as practicable to mitigate infections and adjust according to changing circumstances. Key to our success with this strategy will be reliance on daily available COVID testing and utilizing technology to reduce in-person participation wherever feasible.

The consensus of every public health expert we talked to focused on three basic principles – hands, mask, and distancing - practice proper hand hygiene, wearing a mask or face covering, and using social distancing to maintain space. In following these basic steps, we can significantly reduce the risk of infection, and, most importantly, the risk of a virus spreading event. We will be requiring face coverings and social distancing wherever possible, and we will be enforcing these practices diligently, especially when around others. I ask that you lead by example. If you feel sick – don't come in. I know for many

of us, including myself, there is a refrain to “push through the pain” during Session. It cannot be that way if we are to have a successful Session. I ask that Senators and staff join me in practicing these safe methods to ensure we can have as safe a Session as possible.

Attached to this letter, you will find a 21-slide presentation that outlines the plans for the upcoming Session. I urge you to read it closely, and contact Jake Weissmann in my office with any questions. This plan is built to be flexible, and while it has the potential to be altered as we learn more and continue to receive input, we ask that you treat this as the plan for the upcoming Session.

This Session will be a different one than we have ever faced. But from my conversations with every member of this Chamber, I am confident that the Senate of Maryland will continue to be a place where the work of Maryland is done in a thorough and deliberative manner. I look forward to seeing you in January, and working together in the months ahead.

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be the name "Bill". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.