

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## Losses, wins for Moore agenda

Lawmakers slash, combine and amend priorities of new governor during 'honeymoon'

By Sam Janesch

Maryland Gov. Wes Moore — two months into an administration that he promised would move boldly, yet cautiously — is both racking up wins and coming up short. The first-time politician entered office

in January with ambitious goals such as ending child poverty, creating new pathways to public service, and making major investments in transportation infrastructure and education.

Now in the homestretch of the annual 90-day lawmaking session in Annapolis, Moore's first year is likely to show progress in those areas — just not all at the levels he wanted.

Lawmakers are poised to pass all 10 of the governor's bills. But even with Moore lobby-

ing in person and in public and with Democrats in control of both the legislative and executive ends of the lawmaking process for the first time in eight years, legislators have scaled back many of his proposals.

A plan to increase the minimum wage was slowed down and legislators gutted a key provision that would allow for automatic yearly hikes. Tax cuts for veterans were slimmed down by more than half. Hundreds of millions of dollars set aside in the budget for unspecified transportation funds were

eliminated.

Keiffer Mitchell, a former Democratic delegate from Baltimore who became Republican Gov. Larry Hogan's chief legislative officer, said Moore has had a successful first session so far, while facing necessary pushback from "prudent" legislators.

"Any governor has earned the right to set the agenda as they see fit. They spend over

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## Setting a high bar

Annapolis High receives ESPN, Maryland Special Olympics award for unified sports efforts

By Brooks DuBose

Annapolis High School was honored Friday by the Maryland Special Olympics and ESPN for its efforts in promoting unified sports.

The school received a Unified Champions School award for "meeting national standards of excellence in the areas of inclusion, advocacy, and respect" during the 2021-22 school year, according to a Maryland Special Olympics news release.

A unified student-teacher basketball game was held Friday afternoon in a packed gymnasium attended by students, parents, staff and a host of county dignitaries, including Superintendent Mark Bedell, Board of Education President Joanna Bache Tobin and other board members. ESPN's Victoria Arlen co-hosted the event.

Bedell tossed up the ball to tip the game off. At halftime, officials held a National Unified Champions banner-raising ceremony.

"Our school system as a whole has placed a tremendous emphasis not just on inclusion, but on access and creating a true sense of belonging for every student," Bedell said in a statement. "The work that has been done at Annapolis High School is both superb and inspiring, and it sets a high bar for others in our county and far beyond."

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Top: Special Olympics and ESPN celebrated Annapolis High School at halftime of a student-teacher basketball game to honor the school for being recognized as a National Unified Champions school.

Above: Anne Arundel County Superintendent of School Mark Bedell, center, throws up the tipoff between the students and teachers. PAUL W. GILLESPIE/CAPITAL GAZETTE PHOTOS

## Governor pledges to sign Trans Health Equity Act

By Sam Janesch

At a gathering that evoked the long road to marriage equality and the continued fight for the rights of the LGBTQ community, Gov. Wes Moore said he intends to sign a bill that would require Maryland Medicaid to cover gender-affirming procedures for transgender patients.

"We should not be asking any Marylander to validate their humanity. We should not be asking any Marylander to try to justify their humanness,"

Moore told state lawmakers in a newly formed LGBTQ+ Caucus during a cocktail hour Thursday at the governor's residence.

The Democrat pledged support for the Trans Health Equity Act (House Bill 283 and Senate Bill 460), which dominated House and Senate floor debates in the last week and ultimately passed both chambers.

He also said he would sign two other bills that could make it to his desk before the annual 90-day legislative session ends April 10.

One (House Bill 141 and Senate Bill 251) would repeal a law that allows for a misdemeanor charge if someone knowingly transfers or attempts to transfer HIV to someone else. The other, House Bill 287, would expand and make changes to an existing Commission on LGBTQ Affairs, including changing the name to the Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs.

"As states have restricted and harmed queer people, Maryland is blazing a different path," said Del. Kris Fair, a Frederick County Democrat who leads the eight-member caucus, at Government House.

Moore also referred to recent efforts in conservative states that target the LGBTQ community, including Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders' signing of a law that prohibits transgender people from using school bathrooms that don't match their gender identity at birth, and Florida lawmakers attempting to expand a "don't say gay" law that restricts discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity in schools.

He also referenced his opponent in last year's gubernatorial election,

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WAR IN UKRAINE

## Ukrainians demand emergency meeting with UN

'Kremlin's nuclear blackmail' cited for emergency request

By Karl Ritter  
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine's government on Sunday called for an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council to "counter the Kremlin's nuclear blackmail" after Russian President Vladimir Putin revealed plans to station tactical atomic weapons in Belarus.

One Ukrainian official said Russia "took Belarus as a nuclear hostage."

Further heightening tensions, an explosion deep inside Russia wounded three people Sunday. Russian authorities blamed

a Ukrainian drone for the blast, which damaged residential buildings in a town just 110 miles south of Moscow.

Russia has said the plan to station tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus comes in response to the West's military support for Ukraine.

Putin announced the plan in a TV interview that aired Saturday, saying it was triggered by a U.K. decision to provide Ukraine with armor-piercing rounds containing depleted uranium.

Putin argued that by deploying its tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, Russia was following the lead of the United States. He noted that Washington has nuclear weapons based in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey.

"We are doing what they have been doing for decades, stationing them in certain allied countries, preparing the launch platforms and training their crews," he said.

Ukraine's Foreign Ministry condemned the move in a statement Sunday and demanded an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council.

"Ukraine expects effective action to counter the Kremlin's nuclear blackmail by the U.K., China, the U.S. and France," the statement read, saying these countries "have a special responsibility" regarding nuclear aggression.

"The world must be united against someone who endangers the future of human civilization," the statement said.

Ukraine has not commented on Sunday's

explosion inside Russia. It left a crater about 50 feet in diameter and 16 feet deep, according to media reports.

Russian state-run news agency Tass reported that authorities identified the drone as a Ukrainian Tu-141. The Soviet-era drone was reintroduced in Ukraine in 2014, and has a range of about 620 miles.

The explosion took place in the town of Kireyevsk in the Tula region, about 180 miles from the border with Ukraine. Russia's Defense Ministry said the drone crashed after an electronic jamming system disabled its navigation.

Similar drone attacks have been common during the war, although Ukraine hardly

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