College Affordability

To the editor:

College-educated workers made up 34% of the nation’s workforce in 2012, and earned 53% of the nation’s wages. Demand for college-educated worked increased by 14% over the past four decades, while demand for mid-skill and low-skill workers declined. A college degree creates economic opportunity.

Maryland Democrats are fighting to make that opportunity affordable. Over the past eight years, they first froze tuition and then sharply limited tuition increases at public colleges. As a result, Maryland went from having the 7th most expensive tuition in the nation, to having the 26th least expensive.

College is more affordable thanks to Democrats, but students still take on too much debt to pay for school. The average debt of a college graduate in Maryland was over $27,000 last year.

General Assembly Democrats are helping people with excessive debt and reducing reliance on future borrowing. Their three-pronged plan will help people who have more than $20,000 in debt, encourage families to invest in college savings plans, and provide new incentives for students to graduate on time.

This common sense plan will help more students earn degrees and take on less debt, ensuring economic opportunity for a new generation of Marylanders.

Sincerely,

NAME

Retirement Security

To the editor:

Barely half of Maryland workers reported coverage in a retirement plan in 2012, and more than one-third of workers within ten years of retirement age have saved less than $10,000. As a result, many of our friends and neighbors may be solely dependent on programs like Social Security in retirement.

In Annapolis, Democrats are fighting to help all Marylanders retire with dignity. Last year, they formed a workgroup to develop new ideas to help people prepare for retirement. This year, they will champion a bill to expand workers’ access to retirement savings plans. Democrats also made extra payments to the state retirement system last year to protect teacher and employee retirement plans.

In Washington, President Obama is fighting to help 55 million Americans who do not participate in private retirement savings plans. The Treasury Department and the Department of Labor launched new programs last fall to help workers save for retirement.

When he signed the Social Security Act, President Roosevelt said the law would give “some measure of protection to the average citizen and to his family against the loss of a job and against poverty-ridden old age.” Today, Democrats are continuing the fight for a secure retirement for all Americans.

Sincerely,

NAME

Pay Equity

To the editor:

Women make an average of 79 cents on the dollar for doing the same work as men. In Maryland in 2014, a woman holding a full time job was paid an average of $49,000, while a man holding a full time job was paid an average of $57,000. This discrimination costs women hundreds of thousands of dollars in income over a lifetime, which is why Democrats are committed to creating pay equity for women.

In Washington, Senator Barbara Mikulski is leading the fight for pay equity. Her Paycheck Fairness Act would require employers to show that pay disparities are related to job performance, not gender. It would also prohibit employers from retaliating against employees for sharing salary information and strengthen remedies for pay discrimination.

General Assembly Democrats are doing their part to create pay equity in Maryland. They are proposing to strengthen Maryland’s equal pay law by expanding it to all employers, ensuring businesses cannot penalize employees for discussing salaries, broadening standards to determine whether unlawful compensation discrimination exists, and allowing the Attorney General to enforce pay discrimination claims.

Together, these tools will help to level the playing field in the workplace, creating new economic opportunities for women.

Sincerely,

NAME