



Maryland State Senate, District 24

"If we don't educate our children, we won't have to worry about our future, because there won't be one!"



2025 END OF SESSION LETTER

Heaven is a Big Hug that will last forever!

Dear Supporters and Friends,

On Monday, April 7th, 2025, at 12:00 a.m., the 447th Legislative Session of the Maryland General Assembly ended. I deeply appreciate your input and wonderful unwavering support as we continue to put initiatives into law which will move us onward, upward, and outward. Many decisions in this session were very difficult, such as our overwhelming opposition to internet gambling but with your help, I voted with a focus and firm conviction in protecting our future and interest. While many of our legislative bills did not pass, I am looking forward to reintroducing them next session. This was a fast-paced session which kept us focused and extremely busy. I would like to share legislation and bond bills which directly impact our communities.



TOP 12 ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE 2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Passing a Balanced
Budget that Maintains
Core Commitments to
Marylanders

HB 350, 351, and 352

Lowering Energy Bills
by Promoting the
Affordability, Reliability,
and Predictability of our
Electric Grid

SB 909, 931, and 937

Strengthening
Apprenticeships and
Skills Training

SB 431

Developing World-Class
Public Schools for All
Maryland Children

HB 504

Fighting Back Against
Federal Government
Chaos and Overreach

SB 608, HB 1222, and 1424

Reducing Crime and
Maintaining Safe
Neighborhoods

SB 11 and 590

Preserving
High-Quality Health
Care our Residents
Rely On

SB 5, 357, 374, and 684

Expanding Access
to Affordable
Abortion Care

SB 848

Supporting Maryland's
Seniors and Nursing
Home Residents

SB 223 and 376

Protecting the
Chesapeake Bay and
our State's Natural
Resources

SB 149, 901, and HB 506

Creating an Equitable
Justice System
Focused on
Rehabilitation

SB 181, 432, and HB853

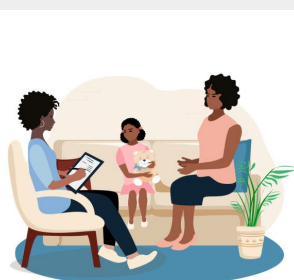
Demanding the
Highest Ethical
Standards from
Elected Officials

HB 932



Senator Benson's Bills

SB 174 Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact



The Maryland General Assembly recently passed Senate Bill 174, which enters the state into the **Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact**. This compact allows licensed social workers to practice across member states with a multistate license, improving access to social work services and addressing workforce shortages. It also establishes a commission to oversee the compact and ensures compliance with professional standards. The bill's implementation is contingent on at least six other states enacting similar legislation.

SB 1005 Federally Qualified Health Centers Grant Program



Passed by the Maryland General Assembly, expands the **Federally Qualified Health Centers Grant Program**. It authorizes the Board of Public Works to provide grants for acquiring land to construct or use federally qualified health centers (FQHCs). These centers aim to improve access to healthcare services for underserved communities. The bill also outlines funding mechanisms, including matching funds from counties, municipal corporations, or nonprofit organizations.

Capitol Bond Bills



The City of Glenarden Public Safety Building - Established in 1939, holds historical significance as one of the first African American-developed communities in Maryland. Its police department was created shortly after incorporation to provide essential public safety services to its residents. Over the decades, the police station has played a critical role in maintaining law and order within the community. The recent allocation of \$2,000,000 is aimed at redeveloping the police station to address aging infrastructure and meet modern public safety standards. This funding will support the construction of a new facility equipped with updated technology, improved operational spaces, and enhanced resources to better serve the growing needs of the community. The redevelopment is expected to bolster law enforcement efficiency and ensure a safer environment for Glenarden's residents.



In 1910, approximately 200 residents voted to incorporate their community as **Capitol Heights**. Over the next 50 years, the town made significant improvements to its infrastructure and services. Now, 115 years later, Capitol Heights continues to work toward becoming an even more family and child friendly community. The town was awarded \$250,000 to establish a **Boys and Girls Club**, which will provide a safe, structured environment for youth during out-of-school hours. The club will offer programs that promote academic success, character development, healthy lifestyles, and leadership skills, ultimately contributing to positive youth development and a stronger community. By reducing negative behaviors and fostering positive citizenship, Boys and Girls Clubs play a pivotal role in shaping the next generation.



Ardmore Park Playground Project is a community-owned and volunteer-operated organization committed to delivering educational, recreational, and youth development programs for children. This initiative is bolstered by the active support of the senior population in Lake Arbor and neighboring communities. The Lake Arbor Capitol Improvement initiative has been awarded \$155,000 in funding. This funding will be utilized for the acquisition, planning, development, construction, redesign, reconstruction, and equipping of the pool and athletic facilities, as well as implementing essential site improvements.



The Suitland Civic Association Community Inc. Community Center, located in Suitland, Maryland, was awarded \$105,000 for the demolition, removal, and disposal of the existing building to prepare for the design of a new facility and site development. The new structure will be a single-story, LEED-certified, slab-on-grade building featuring contemporary masonry, metal paneling, energy-efficient glazing, and a modern roofing system. The site will include over 20 paved parking spaces, front and rear terrace areas, site lighting, art deco features, a children's play area, upgraded utilities, stormwater drainage, and beautifully landscaped surroundings.

Legislative Initiatives

SB130 - Education - Student Personal Electronic Device Use Policy – Required

Requiring the State Department of Education, in collaboration with stakeholders, to develop guidelines for a policy on student use of personal electronic devices during school hours; requiring county boards of education, in consultation with students, parents, teachers, and school personnel, to develop and adopt a policy that limits students from using personal electronic devices except for purposes of a student's individualized education program, to monitor a student's health issue, or when directed for educational purposes; etc.

SB468 (HB1015) - Public Middle, High, and Charter Schools - Start Time for Instruction

Requiring, beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, each public middle school and each public high school to begin instruction not earlier than 8 a.m. and 8:30 a.m., respectively, unless granted a waiver by the State Board of Education under certain circumstances; and requiring each county board of education and each public charter school to implement a certain public service campaign to raise awareness on sleep deprivation and later school start times.

SB469 - State Government - Maryland Reparations Commission - Establishment (Harriet Tubman Community Investment Act)

Establishing the Maryland Reparations Commission to develop and administer a program to provide compensatory benefits to the descendants of individuals enslaved in the State; providing that any individual whose ancestors were enslaved in the State is eligible to receive certain benefits; authorizing the Commission to seek the assistance of State agencies to develop and evaluate processes and applications; requiring the Governor to include in the annual budget bill such sums as necessary to carry out the Act; etc.

SB559 - Transportation - Study on Speed Limits - Interstate 495 and Connected Highways

Requiring the Department of Transportation to conduct a study on the implications of requiring the speed limit to deviate by only 5 miles per hour at locations where a highway in the State connects to Interstate 495; and requiring the Department to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 31, 2025.

SB687 - Child Care Scholarship Program - Youth Transitioning from Foster Placement to Successful Adulthood Pilot Program – Establishment

Establishing the Youth Transitioning From Foster Placement to Successful Adulthood Pilot Program in the Child Care Scholarship Program to assist foster youth in applying for and accessing subsidies in the Program; establishing that the duration of the program is from January 1, 2026, until December 31, 2028; and requiring the State Department of Education to report on the status and an evaluation of the Pilot Program's goals to the General Assembly on or before December 1 of each year of the Pilot Program.

SB1042 - Prince George's County - Property Tax Credit for Grocery Stores – Alterations

Requiring, instead of authorizing, the governing body of Prince George's County to grant, by law, a certain property tax credit against the county property tax imposed on the personal property of certain grocery stores in healthy food priority areas in the county; and applying the Act to all taxable years beginning after June 30, 2025.

Final Thoughts



We remained dedicated to our residents during our 90-day session even though we faced many fiscal and affordability challenges. The members of our General Assembly understood it was not about us. Rather it was about moving forward in raising the bar for future generations. Even with disruptions on federal funding streams we were able to pass a 66.9-billion-dollar Operating Budget with 2.4 billion dollars in cash reserves, 2.1 billion dollars in the Rainy-Day Fund and 317 million dollars in the General Fund. We met the requirement of a balanced budget. With your support, I will continue to lead with honesty, integrity, clarity, compassion, and commitment.

Thank you for being the wind beneath my wings. Your input is vital to this process.

Gripped with Thanksgiving,

Senator Joanne C. Benson

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