



*"Soft is the heart of a child. Embrace it"*

## 2023 End of Session Letter

Greetings Constituents and Supporters,

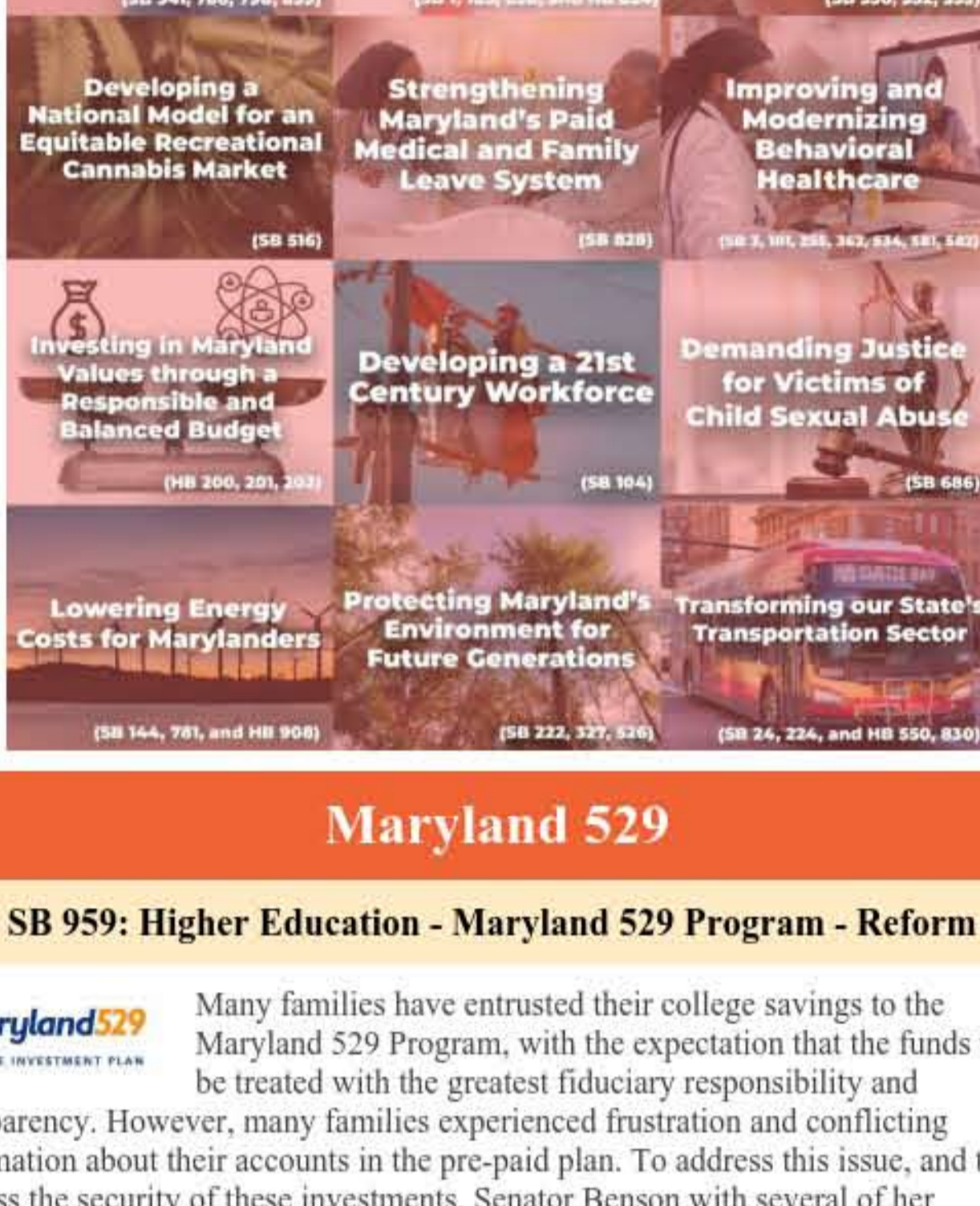
On Monday, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, our 445<sup>th</sup> Session of the Maryland General Assembly was complete. I deeply appreciate your wonderful support and input as we continue to "raise the bar" for our 24<sup>th</sup> Legislative District and County. Many of the decisions in Annapolis are difficult and require many hours of thought and process, I have voted with a focused and firm conviction in protecting your interests. While many bills passed and failed, I want to share some of the most important legislation which directly impact our communities and lays the foundation for future generations.



## Experience Prince George's County

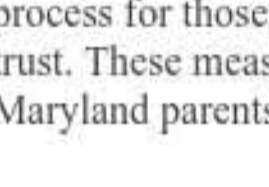


## TOP 12 ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE 2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION



## Maryland 529

### SB 959: Higher Education - Maryland 529 Program - Reform

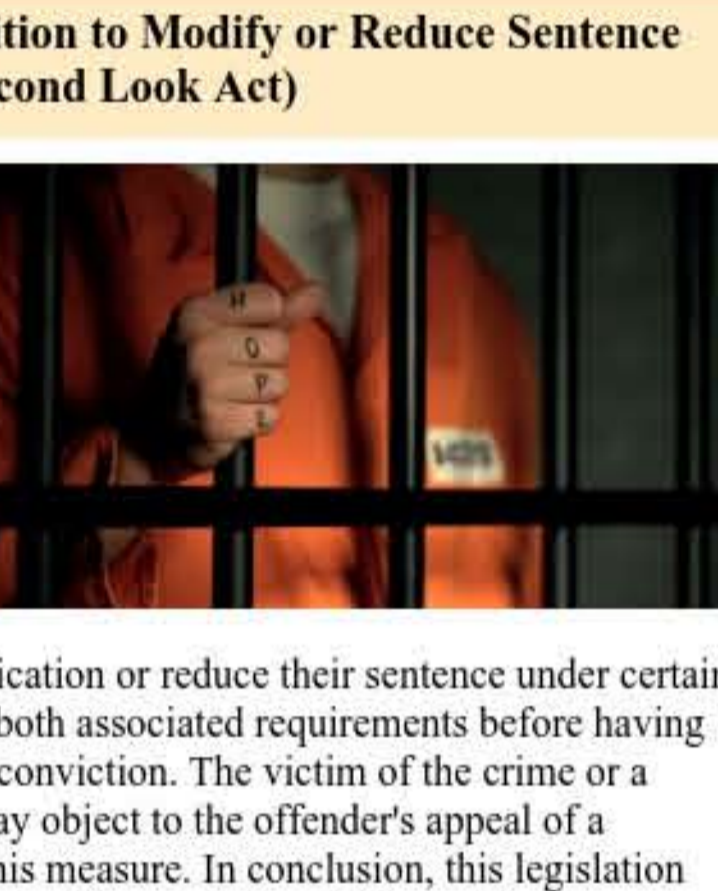


Many families have entrusted their college savings to the Maryland 529 Program, with the expectation that the funds would be treated with the greatest fiduciary responsibility and transparency. However, many families experienced frustration and conflicting information about their accounts in the pre-paid plan. To address this issue, and to address the security of these investments, Senator Benson with several of her colleagues, introduced Senate Bill 959 which has passed legislation. This bill aims to reform the State's college savings program. The bill will transfer the administration of the program and the fiduciary responsibility for the program to the State Treasurer. The bill calls for the repeal of the Maryland 529 Board and instead entrusts the board's duties to the Treasurer. Additionally, the bill phases out the pre-paid plan and allows account holders to transfer their funds to the college savings investment plan, which operates without issue. Importantly, the bill also establishes a claims process for those account holders that seek a financial remedy from the program's trust. These measures aim to create a more reliable financial investment system for Maryland parents, allowing them to provide their children with a quality education.

## Cancer Screening

### SB 965: Cancer Screening- Health Insurance and Assessment of Outreach Education, and Health Disparities

Over half a million people have been diagnosed with breast and lung cancer at some point in their life. Surviving cancer is only half the fight; the other half is the financial burden that survivors and their families must bear. The goal of this legislation is to create a Breast and Lung Cancer Screening Awareness Program within the Maryland Department of Health. (MDH). This bill has been passed and would require insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations (also known as carriers) to cover breast cancer diagnosis and related "diagnostic imaging," as well as follow-up diagnostic imaging to assist in the diagnosis of lung cancer, subject to cost-sharing limitations.



## Maryland Second Look Act

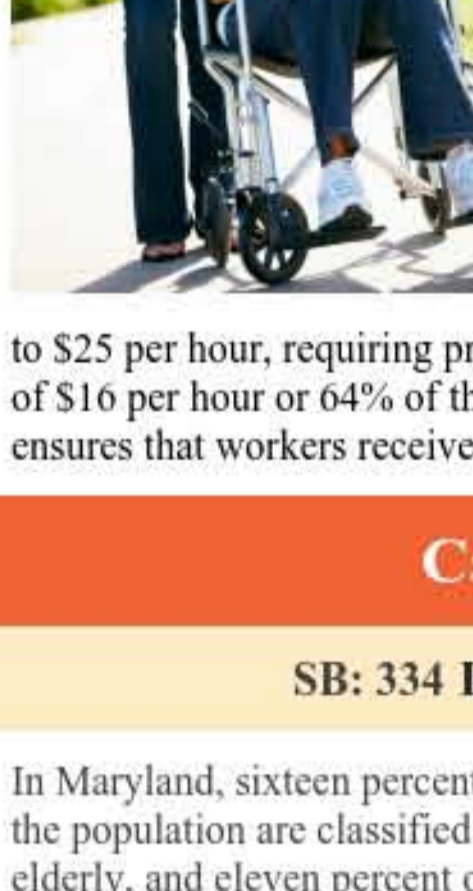
### SB 771: Criminal Procedure- Petition to Modify or Reduce Sentence (Maryland Second Look Act)

The Maryland Second Look Act will aid prison reform by providing that deserving individuals a chance to be high functioning members of society. The bill will allow for people in the prison system to be able to modify their sentence and be given a second chance. The intent of this legislation is to make it possible for someone who is currently serving a sentence to request a court modification or reduce their sentence under certain circumstances. The petitioner must satisfy both associated requirements before having the option to file an appeal following their conviction. The victim of the crime or a representative of the victim of the crime may object to the offender's appeal of a sentence modification or reduction under this measure. In conclusion, this legislation will ensure that our court systems continue to adhere to just and fair practices.



## Maryland Medical Assistance Program

### SB 604: Maryland Medical Assistance Program- Provider Agencies and Personal Care Aides- Reimbursement and Wages

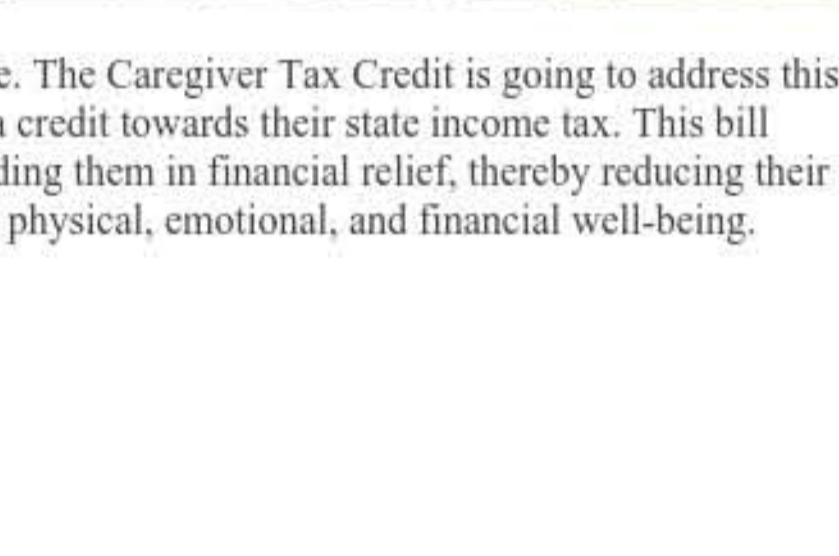


This legislation is critical in providing fair working conditions for personal care workers throughout the state, as it assigns a reasonable wage to each worker within medical agencies. Ninety percent of home care employees in Maryland are women. Their average hourly wage in Maryland is only \$14, leaving them underpaid and exhausted, potentially jeopardizing the quality of care given to this population in need. This bill ensures that our caregivers are properly protected while also compensating them for their efforts by raising the hourly wage from \$14 to \$16. This legislation only pertains to Medicaid home care provided by the Department of Health. The goal of this legislation is to increase the Medicaid reimbursement rates for home care from \$23 to \$25 per hour, requiring provider agencies to pay personal care aides a higher wage of \$16 per hour or 64% of the hourly reimbursement rate. Overall this legislation ensures that workers receive a fair share of Medicaid funds.

## Caregiver Tax Credit

### SB: 334 Income Tax - Caregiver Tax Credit

In Maryland, sixteen percent of the population are classified as elderly, and eleven percent of people have impairments; when added together, they make up a total of twenty-seven percent of Marylanders who qualify for caregiver needs. Caregivers often work tirelessly taking care of this population, without receiving a fair wage, which has a significant impact on many families in our state. The Caregiver Tax Credit is going to address this issue by providing caregivers with a credit towards their state income tax. This bill would help protect caregivers by aiding them in financial relief, thereby reducing their stress and preventing strain on their physical, emotional, and financial well-being.



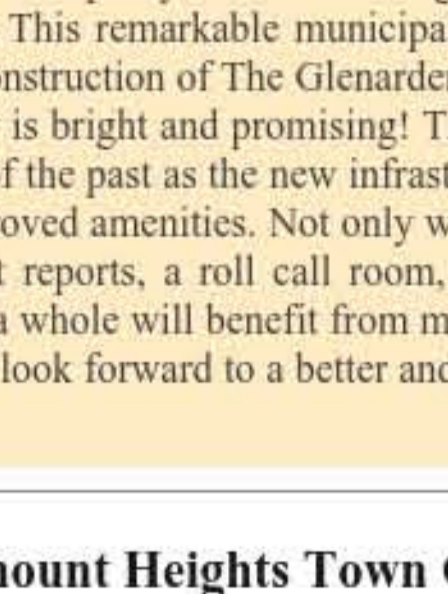
## Bond Bills

### Town of Capitol Heights Community Center



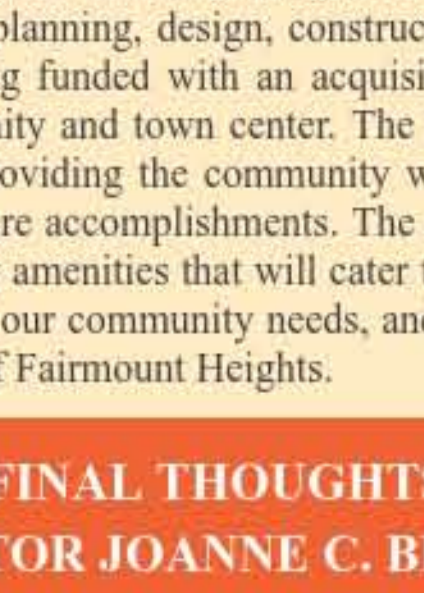
The Town of Capitol Heights was established in 1910 as a municipal organization with the aim of offering public services to its members, including a place where they could go to perform their civic duties. We want to make sure we give citizens a suitable location to voice any community problems to their local government, which is why the project has now received 200 thousand dollars in order to support the cost of construction. The Project will add space to the existing Capitol Heights Town Hall that will include a second-floor addition of 4,000 square feet for a Community Center; which will serve as a venue for events and meetings for townwide services that benefits families, children, elders, and veterans. The project will also involve expanding the Council Chambers at Town Hall by 1,250 square feet, giving locals a larger area to attend public meetings. This project will amass roughly over 6000 square feet, all for the citizens of Capitol Heights to be able to use, to conduct their local operations for their municipality.

### Glenarden Police Facility



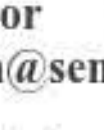
The City of Glenarden is a municipality in Prince Georges County, Maryland, situated at 8600 Glenarden Parkway. This remarkable municipality is receiving 400 thousand dollars to begin expanding construction of The Glenarden Police Facility. The future of the Glenarden Police Facility is bright and promising! The current shortcomings in the facility will soon be a thing of the past as the new infrastructure promises ample space, updated equipment, and improved amenities. Not only will police officers benefit from a dedicated area for resident reports, a roll call room, a locker room, and a supply room, but the community as a whole will benefit from more effective police operations and increased safety. We can look forward to a better and brighter future for Glenarden with this new facility.

### Fairmount Heights Town Center



Fairmount Heights in Prince George's County has an extensive history going back to its establishment in the early 20th century; the passage of time from the past to the present shows the necessity for innovation within the town to maintain our lovely county in immaculate condition. The town center located at 6100 Jost Street is in need of renovation in order for the town to have adequate support for critical necessities. We believe that the new town center will become a valuable asset to the community, offering an inclusive space for all residents to come and join together as one in our community. The acquisition, planning, design, construction, and capital equipment of the property is currently being funded with an acquisition of 100 hundred thousand dollars to restore the community and town center. The project is particularly exciting since it will soon be built, providing the community with visible evidence of Prince George's County's infrastructure accomplishments. The new town center will feature a modern design of high-quality amenities that will cater to the needs of the community. This town center will address our community needs, and ensure a safe and welcoming environment for the citizens of Fairmount Heights.

## FINAL THOUGHTS SENATOR JOANNE C. BENSON



## SENATE OF MARYLAND

I am very grateful for all you do in helping to support our community as we seek a safe, orderly, just and prosperous place of peace and happiness. I pledge my commitment in doing the very best for you in Annapolis. I am your voice and champion. I ask that you volunteer and share your expertise with us. A rising tide lifts all ships. We are the village. Please feel free to let me know any issues, or services which may be addressed. Stay well and keep looking up.

Our office doors are always open. Please call if you have questions, comments or concerns at (301) 858-3148 or email: joanne.benson@senate.state.md.us.

With Thanksgiving,

*Joanne C. Benson*