



Joanne C.  
**BENSON**

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!”***



## 2024 END OF SESSION LETTER

Dear Supporters and Friends,

It brings me immense pleasure to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you who have provided unwavering support and valuable input during the recent legislative session. On Monday, April 8, 2024, at midnight, the 446th Legislative Session concluded, and I am deeply grateful for your contributions as we endeavor to uplift and enhance the 24th Legislative District and County. Undoubtedly, the decisions made in Annapolis are complex and require extensive thought and deliberation. Nevertheless, I voted with a steadfast conviction to protect your interests and ensure that our community's needs are met. While some bills were passed, and others failed, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the most pivotal legislation that directly impacts our communities and sets the stage for future generations. I am humbled by your continued support and am honored to represent you. Together, we can make a difference and build a better future for all.



# Senator Benson's Bills

## SB 036 Correctional Service Investigation of Suspected Homicide Reporting



This bill requires the Department of State Police to be tasked with investigating any deaths of incarcerated individuals suspected to be homicides that occur while they are in the custody of the Division of Correction, regardless of whether the incident transpires within or outside prisons. Additionally, the Department of State Police is obligated to provide an annual report detailing the preceding year's activities to the Governor and the General Assembly, according to § 2-1257 of the State Government Article,

by December 31 of each calendar year. The report should include: 1. The number of investigations conducted by the Department of State Police under this section. 2. The number of cases referred by the Department of State Police for prosecution following an investigation completed under this section. Lastly, This Act will take effect on October 1, 2024.

## SB 202 Income Tax Caregiver Tax Credit



The objective of this legislation is to support caregivers by providing them with a tax credit against the State income tax. In addition, the legislation establishes the Caregiver Expense Grant Program within the Department of Aging. This program aims to award grants to eligible caregivers for qualified expenses incurred during a taxable year, and to provide care or support to certain qualified family members. The purpose of this legislation is to provide caregivers with financial assistance and recognition

for their invaluable contributions to society. It aims to ease the financial burden on caregivers, who often must bear significant costs associated with care-giving. The legislation seeks to promote the well-being of caregivers and their families and to ensure that they have the resources they need to provide necessary care for their loved ones.



# SB 897 Income Tax Subtraction Modification Death Benefits Law Enforcement Office and Fire Fighters



This legislation permits a subtraction under the Maryland income tax for the payment of specific death benefits to a surviving spouse or beneficiary of a deceased law enforcement officer or firefighter, under specific circumstances. The Act will apply retroactively and generally relates to a subtraction modification under the Maryland income tax for law enforcement officers and firefighter death benefits.

# SB 723 Baby Food-Toxic Heavy Metals Testing and Labeling



This proposal seeks to impose new requirements on manufacturers of baby food in Maryland to ensure the safety of the product. Specifically, manufacturers would be mandated to conduct certain testing for toxic heavy metals on baby food before packaging them for sale or distribution in the State. The proposed legislation would also require manufacturers to provide detailed information about toxic heavy metals on their website and the baby food product label, ensuring that consumers have the necessary information to make informed decisions. Moreover, consumers who believe baby food containing toxic heavy metals that exceed limits established by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration would be required to report it to the Maryland Department of Health. This

reporting requirement would help to ensure that any potential health risks are identified and addressed. Overall, the proposed legislation seeks to protect the health and well-being of Maryland's youngest residents by addressing the issue of toxic heavy metals in baby food.

# SB 50 Human Relations-Commission Civil Rights, Appeal of Final Order



This provision has been put in place to ensure that if someone files a complaint related to a discriminatory act with the Commission on Civil Rights, and the Commission issues a final order on the matter, that order can be appealed under the Administrative Procedure Act. This provision applies specifically to the Commission on Civil Rights and the process of appealing final orders. It aims to provide a clear and fair process for individuals who feel that they have been the victims of discriminatory acts.

# SB 108 Income Tax Subtraction Modification Police Auxiliary and Reserve Volunteer



This proposal aims to increase the tax deduction for Maryland residents who serve as police auxiliaries or reserve volunteers. The goal is to provide a tax benefit to those who support law enforcement in these roles. The proposal suggests modifying Maryland's income tax laws to offer a more substantial tax deduction for residents who volunteer as police auxiliaries or reserve police officers, making it a more meaningful benefit for individuals who serve in these positions. Volunteer officers play a vital role in maintaining law and order in the state and ensuring public safety.

By offering a more significant tax benefit, this proposal aims to recognize and reward the valuable contributions of volunteer officers and encourage more Maryland residents to consider serving in these roles. This, in turn, would help strengthen law enforcement efforts in the state and ensure that Maryland residents receive the protection they deserve. This legislation is a significant step towards recognizing the contributions of volunteer officers and encouraging more individuals to consider serving as police auxiliaries or reserve police officers.

# SB 747 Local Government-Annual Audit Reporting Requirements-Alterations



This bill imposes a financial penalty through the reduction of 20% of State funding for local highway user revenues and disparity grants if a local government fails to submit required audited financial reports within two calendar years after the deadline. The bill applies prospectively beginning with the fiscal

year 2024 audits. The bill takes effect July 1, 2024

# Capitol Bond Bills Grant



Hey Neighbors! Did you know that the City of Glenarden in Prince George's County, Maryland is getting a major upgrade? The municipality is receiving a whopping \$250,000 to expand the construction of the Glenarden Police Facility! With this expansion, the future of the Glenarden Police Facility is looking brighter than ever. The new infrastructure promises ample space, updated equipment, and improved amenities that will provide the police officers with a dedicated area for resident reports, a roll

call room, a locker room, and a supply room. Not only that, but the community will benefit from more effective police operations and increased safety. We can all look forward to a better and brighter future for Glenarden with the new facility. Exciting times ahead!



The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) is dedicated to improving the quality of life for all citizens in the bi-county area and surrounding communities. This is done by managing physical growth, protecting natural, cultural, and historic resources, and providing recreational experiences. We are proud to announce our partnership with KABOOM!, a national nonprofit dedicated to eliminating play space inequity in historically disinvested communities across the country. Together, we will

be working to upgrade the play space infrastructure at Highland Gardens Park. The project has received **\$150,000** to support the construction of the project. Our goal is to replace outdated play equipment and surfacing with more contemporary and inclusive options. These options will be selected with input from the community, especially children, to increase their sense of ownership and enhance their sense of belonging. By improving the playground, we aim to increase the park's usability for residents and caregivers with younger children and increase foot traffic throughout the park. Studies have shown that increased foot traffic in public spaces like this can improve mental health and reduce instances of crime. We are confident that this project will make a significant impact and contribute to our ongoing efforts to enhance the quality of life of our citizens. We appreciate your support.



The White Rose Foundation, Inc. (WRF) is a non-profit organization formed by a group of professional women who are dedicated to serving their community in Prince George's County, Maryland. Since its charter in December 2005, WRF has been committed to promoting scientific, educational, and charitable endeavors that improve the health, education, economy, and general welfare of the residents of Prince George's County.

Recently, WRF received a \$250,000 State Bond Bill Grant Money to establish community partnerships that bring much-needed resources to areas of greatest need in Prince George's County. As part of this initiative, WRF has teamed up with Mission First Housing and their development team to construct a 136-unit residential building for seniors in the Town Square in Suitland, Maryland. WRF will expand its senior services and programs on the ground floor of the Suitland Senior Residences (The Lewis) to better serve the senior residents. This partnership with Mission First Housing will allow WRF to continue its efforts in promoting the well-being of the residents of Prince George's County.



The Prince George's County Cultural Arts Foundation, Inc. is a non-profit organization that is led by volunteers and dedicated to promoting educational, cultural, recreational, and charitable activities in Prince George's County, Maryland, and its surrounding areas. The foundation aims to foster the cultural arts,

including music, drama, the fine arts, and other activities. Every year, the foundation hosts a five-day music event called the Lake Arbor Jazz Festival, which features nationally recognized jazz artists and top jazz and R&B musicians and serves as an annual fundraising event. Due to the festival's growth, the foundation acquired security fencing, safety equipment, crowd control equipment, festival tents, and other necessary items to ensure everyone's safety. Recently, the Prince George's County Cultural Arts Foundation, Inc. received a Capitol Grant Funding of \$25,000 to further support the festival's success.



The Prince George's County Police - Fairwood Community Resource Center is dedicated to providing professional law enforcement services with highly trained personnel who are accountable to our community. The department is committed to demonstrating and maintaining the highest ethical standards, both personally and professionally. Their goal is to provide competent and effective delivery of service in response to community concerns. They strive to provide service in a manner that is sensitive to our diverse and multicultural

community. The officers are trained to provide courteous police service with respect for the rights and dignity of all people we serve. Finally, the department believes in maintaining a shared and open relationship of involvement with all segments of our community. Recently, Prince George's County Police Department – Fairwood Community Resource Center received a Capitol Grant Funding of \$72,000 total renovation of the Community Center.



The Town of Capitol Heights has a long history of providing its residents with essential public services. Established in 1910, the town's mission has been to offer a variety of amenities, including a space where citizens can perform their civic duties. Recognizing the need for a central location where community members can voice their concerns to local government officials, a new project has been launched to build a community center in the heart of Capitol Heights. Thanks to the

recent approval of \$200,000 in funding, this project will cover many aspects of the community center's development from acquisition, planning, design, construction, repair, renovation, reconstruction, site improvement, and equipment. The new center will serve as a hub of activity for residents and offer a range of services, programs, and resources to meet the diverse needs of the surrounding community.





# TOP 12 ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE 2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

**Supporting Those Impacted by the Francis Scott Key Bridge Collapse**

(SB 1188)

**Improving the Accountability, Rehabilitation, and Coordination (ARC) of our Juvenile Justice System**

(SB 360, 652, and HB 814)

**Enhancing Public Safety in our Neighborhoods through Gun Safety**

(SB 475 and SB 488)

**Building a World-Class Public School System**

(SB 161, 771, 797, 937, and HB 1441)

**Tackling Child Poverty and Strengthening Communities**

(SB 482)

**Strengthening Basic Consumer Protections in Pricing and Privacy**

(SB 1, 539, 541, and 571)

**Expanding Access to Affordable Housing and Renter Protections**

(SB 360, HB 538, 599, and 693)

**Preventing Book Banning in School and Public Libraries**

(SB 738)

**Investing in Maryland Values through a Competitive and Balanced FY25 Budget**

(SB 360, 361, and 362)

**Transitioning to a Greener, More Efficient Energy Grid**

(SB 474, 570, 783, HB 864, 1296, and 1393)

**Safeguarding the Chesapeake Bay and Maryland's Environment**

(SB 653, 969, and 1074)

**Setting Guardrails and Encouraging Innovation in Artificial Intelligence**

(SB 818)

# Final Thoughts



SENATE  
OF MARYLAND

I want to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for everything you have done to support our community. You have been a true beacon of hope and inspiration for so many, and your unwavering commitment to creating a safe, just, and prosperous environment has not gone unnoticed. I know that we've faced our fair share of challenges and hardships along the way, and I want you to know that I understand how difficult it can be to stay positive during tough times. However, I believe that it is precisely during these moments that we must come together and remind ourselves of the importance of gratitude and good health. So, let us continue to support each other and look forward to brighter days ahead. And when we finally get to see each other again, I am ready to give you the biggest, warmest hug you've ever had. Our office is always open. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns feel free to contact us via phone at (301) 858-3148 or email: [joanne.benson@senate.state.md.us](mailto:joanne.benson@senate.state.md.us).

**Gripped with Love,**

*Senator Joanne C. Benson*

