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Legislative District 24
Prince George's County

MAJORITY WHIP

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Education, Business, and Administration

Pensions

Chair, Procurement

Joint Committees

Audit and Evaluation Committee

Children, Youth, and Families

Ending Homelessness

Fair Practices and
State Personnel Oversight



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

*“If we don’t educate our children, we don’t have to worry
about our future, because there won’t be one!”*

April 20, 2026

Dear Supporters and Friends:

The 2026 Legislative Session ended Monday, April 13th, at 12:00 a.m. As a forty-year veteran educator and public servant, I have dedicated my life to serving those who need it most. My beloved residents have afforded me the privilege to represent their interests. That is where my heart truly lies. I have remained an unwavering defender for those who cannot speak for themselves, our seniors, our veterans, our children, and our working families — grounded in a deep commitment to service and focused on delivering real, tangible results for every one of my constituents.

Although I will not serve in Annapolis, I will continue to serve this great State of Maryland by continuing to “stand on principle” while lifting up and supporting causes in the 24th Legislative District which will raise the bar for future generations. My office staff and the 202 Coalition have been an invaluable resource by providing information and initiatives which have helped in moving us onward, upward, and outward.

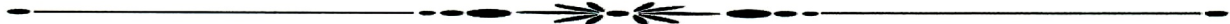
As I continue this work beyond Annapolis, I remain committed to advocating for District 24, supporting our families, and securing the resources that strengthen our communities – because serving you has been one of the greatest honors of my life.

Delivering for District 24: Results, Advocacy, and What Comes Next

During this legislative session, my office remained focused on one priority: delivering real results for the residents of District 24. That meant fighting for affordability, protecting working families, strengthening public safety, investing in education, and ensuring our community receives its fair share of state resources. We advanced that work through direct constituent services, legislative advocacy, and securing meaningful investments in our community.

**TOP 12 ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE
2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

<p align="center">Protecting Marylanders from Unconstitutional and Lawless Federal Enforcement</p> <p>SB1, 245, 346, 504, 791, 792, 810, and HB1017</p>	<p align="center">Holding Utility Companies Accountable and Lowering Energy Bills</p> <p>SB841</p>	<p align="center">Increasing the Availability of Affordable Housing to Reduce Costs</p> <p>SB325, 829, and 937</p>
<p align="center">Prohibiting Dynamic and Predatory Pricing</p> <p>SB387</p>	<p align="center">Modernizing Maryland’s Economy and Supporting Small Businesses</p> <p>SB388, 756, 757, 767, 770, 905, 920, and HB894</p>	<p align="center">Strengthening Unions and Maryland’s Middle Class</p> <p>SB6, 28, 417, 445, 831, and HB141</p>
<p align="center">Balancing the State’s Budget While Investing in Maryland Values</p> <p>SB282, 283, and 284</p>	<p align="center">Ensuring World Class Schools and Child Care for All Marylanders</p> <p>SB311, 745, HB525, 849, and 1321</p>	<p align="center">Enhancing Public Safety and Minimizing Gun Violence</p> <p>SB160, 334, and 775</p>
<p align="center">Creating a Criminal Justice System Focused on Rehabilitation and Accountability</p> <p>SB187, 323, and 483</p>	<p align="center">Leading on Regulating Artificial Intelligence</p> <p>SB8, 141, 597, and 720</p>	<p align="center">Bolstering Healthcare Despite Federal Attacks</p> <p>SB169, 276, 385, 411, and 521</p>



Constituent Services: Real Help for Real People

Our office collaborated directly with residents to resolve complex issues involving state agencies, taxes, housing, Medicaid Waiver, and unemployment insurance (UI) benefits.

This included:

- Assisted a constituent with a surviving spouse property tax exemption appeal, coordinated directly with Comptroller's Office and State Department of Assessments and Taxation.
- We aided a family facing discontinuation of critical Medicaid services due to administrative errors, helping them connect with state and federal agencies for resolution.
- Helped families navigate state systems and access critical services.

This work often happens quietly, but it is the most immediate way we serve you. When you reach out, our office responds.

Standing Up for Families:

Advocated for DDA funding and essential healthcare services to protect vulnerable residents and families. This session, our office heard directly from families across District 24 about the importance of **Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)**.

Constituents made clear that:

- These services are essential for independence and quality of life.
- Proposed funding reduction would directly impact vulnerable residents.
- Families rely on these programs for stability, care, and opportunity.

In response, I engaged in ongoing conversations and advocacy to ensure District 24 is heard during the state budget process.

Legislative Leadership: Moving Priority Issues Forward

This session, I introduced legislation focused on education, public safety, workforce development, transportation, and child protection.

Key efforts included:

- Strengthening classroom learning environments
- Supporting student success through improved school schedules
- Expanding community-based public safety strategies
- Increasing workforce opportunities through apprenticeships
- Improving highway safety and traffic conditions
- Strengthening protections for children

I also supported broader efforts to lower housing costs, expand healthcare access, strengthen protections for workers, and grow Maryland's economy through support for small businesses and emerging industries.

SB0118 Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act

This legislation SB 118 helps to create a dedicated funding source for violence prevention and public safety programs. This bill places an excise tax on firearms, firearm accessories, and ammunition, with funds directed toward community-based intervention programs, victim support services, and school safety initiatives. The impact of this legislation is to create a stronger, more proactive approach to reducing violence by investing directly in prevention, healing, and safer neighborhoods for families.

SB0143 Maryland Workforce Apprenticeship Utilization Act

This legislation significantly strengthens workforce development by requiring greater participation in youth apprenticeship programs on public works projects. By ensuring contractors help train skilled workers, this bill expands access to good-paying jobs and hands-on career opportunities. The impact is a stronger local workforce, reduced unemployment, and more residents equipped with the skills needed to succeed in today's economy.

SB0124 Food, Drugs, and Cosmetics – Gene Structure and Function Labeling

This legislation aids in requiring clear labeling of products developed using gene-altering technologies. This bill ensures consumers know exactly what they are purchasing and consuming. SB124 ensures greater transparency, increased consumer trust, and the ability for individuals and families to make better informed and correct decisions about their health.

SB0103 Public Schools – Start Time for Instruction

This legislation requires later start time for middle and high schools to better align with modern day struggles of student health and development. Research shows that more sleep leads to better academic performance, improved mental health, and fewer behavioral issues. The bill would positively impact on students, allowing them to achieve better sleep and health, massively reducing the negative mental health effects placed on young people due to the lack of sleep. Focused students who are better prepared are more likely to succeed both in and outside the classroom.

SB0079 County Boards of Education – Student Technology Use Policy – Requirements

This legislation requires schools to limit student use of personal electronic devices during school hours, while still allowing exceptions for education and health needs. By reducing distractions from phones and other electronic devices, this bill helps students stay engaged and focused, which is important in this new era of technology & innovation. The benefits are an improved learning environment, stronger academic performance, and better classroom discipline for our young students of Maryland. We must protect Maryland students from unnecessary distractions, as they are the future leaders of tomorrow – and this bill helps ensure they have the focused learning environment they need to succeed.

SB0736 Criminal Law – Obscene Matter – Visual Representation of Child

This bill increases, from 16 years to 18 years, the maximum age of a child that may not be depicted in visual representations subject to the prohibitions under 11-208 of the Criminal Law Article. SB 736 is a critical bill that is vital toward modernizing Maryland law to combat child exploitation significantly to include AI generated imagery. This legislation is carefully drafted and does not apply drawings, cartoons, sculptures, or paintings, ensuring that protected expression remains unaffected while still protecting children.

SB0179 Transportation – Study on Speed Limits – Interstate 495 and Connected Highways

This legislation addresses ongoing traffic safety and congestion concerns along Interstate 495 and its connected roadways. It requires the MDOT to conduct a comprehensive study of speed limits at key connection points to I-495. The study will identify where speed limits change and assess how those changes impact traffic flow and driver safety. It will also review data from the past five years, including accidents, speeding violations, congestion patterns, and roadway hazards. The goal is to better understand risks associated with inconsistent speed transitions and improve roadway conditions. This measure supports data-driven solutions to enhance safety and reduce congestion for Maryland drivers.

SB0737 Juvenile Law – Probation and Treatment Services – Requiring Disposition (Parental Accountability Act)

This legislation strengthens accountability and early intervention within Maryland’s juvenile justice system. It requires courts to place certain repeat juvenile offenders or chronically truant youth on supervised probation instead of leaving outcomes to discretion alone. The bill ensures that the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services develops a structured treatment plan tailored to the child’s needs. It also requires parents or guardians to actively participate in rehabilitative services designed to support family stability and reduce repeat offenses. If a parent or guardian fails to engage, the court is required to intervene and enforce compliance. Overall, this measure focuses on prevention, family involvement, and rehabilitation to improve long-term outcomes for youth and public safety.

In Annapolis, progress often takes multiple sessions. This year, these proposals advanced key conversations, built stakeholder support, and positioned these priorities for future passage.

Public Safety & Community Support

I also worked alongside colleagues to support legislation strengthening **law enforcement recruitment and retention**, including efforts to enhance retirement security for Seat Pleasant Police officers.

Supporting those who serve our community remains a top priority.

Securing Investments for District 24

A major focus this session was advocating for capital funding and project approval that directly benefits our communities.

Local Bond Investment Secured

District 24 projects received over \$1.17 million in funded local bond initiatives, including:

- Community service centers
- Workforce and training programs
- Youth and recreation investments
- Municipal development projects

State Capital Budget Impact

District 24 is included in the Governor's FY2027 capital budget with approximately **\$8.45 million in proposed funding**, supporting:

- Economic development projects
- School improvements
- Community redevelopment
- Transit-oriented and infrastructure investments

Board of Public Works (BPW) Activity

Recent approval and funding action impacting District 24 include:

- **\$3.7 million housing investment** supporting affordable rental development in District Heights
- Grants for community facilities in Capitol Heights
- Investments in public spaces and redevelopment projects

These investments reflect continued progress in strengthening our district's infrastructure, housing, school improvement, healthcare facilities, and economic growth.

Continuing the Work

As I am preparing to conclude my legislative service, I remain fully committed to serving District 24 through the remainder of my term until **January 1, 2027**.

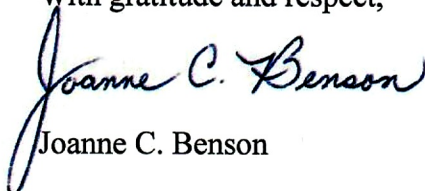
I will continue working to:

- Advocate for District 24 priorities
- Support residents and families
- Secure resources that strengthen our communities

It has been an honor to serve you!

You have been the "*wind beneath my wings*" through the highs and lows of my life. I am so grateful and thankful to lift up and give strong encouragement as a problem solver for the homeless, hopeless, and helpless. Your trust in me keeps me moving, motivated and mindful that "*there is a NAME*" who has been my light in dark places. It's been an effort of "No Foolishness." May joy continues to flow as you are abundantly and richly blessed!

With gratitude and respect,


Joanne C. Benson