

LEGISLATIVE SESSION 2023 WRAP-UP NEWSLETTER

THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION IN NUMBERS

The Maryland General Assembly met for their 90-day legislative session from January to April and considered over 2500 bills. Frederick County's Legislative Affairs team monitored the legislative session and advocated for the priorities and interests of Frederick County Government to Annapolis lawmakers.

Our FCG Team:

- Submitted testimony on 88 bills
- Worked with the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) to testify on 289 bills
- Analyzed the fiscal impact of over 80 bills on Frederick County Government

STATE SUPPORT TO FREDERICK COUNTY

State Funding to Frederick County

\$2.1 Million for Public Safety

This funding will support our new Public Safety Communications Center.

\$3 Million for Cyber Security

This funding will support the renovation of the Prospect Center to house FCG Interagency Information Technologies and better secure our data center.

\$1 Million for Animal Control

This funding will support the expansion and renovation of the Frederick County Animal Shelter.

\$5.2 Million for Frederick County Municipalities

Collaboration between municipal leaders, the State Delegation, the Moore Administration, and our team secured funding for important projects throughout our municipalities.

\$4.5 Million in Grants to Nonprofits in Frederick County

Through the state's bonding authority, the Frederick County Delegation secured funding for nonprofits in Frederick County.

\$17.4 Million for capital projects for FCPS Schools

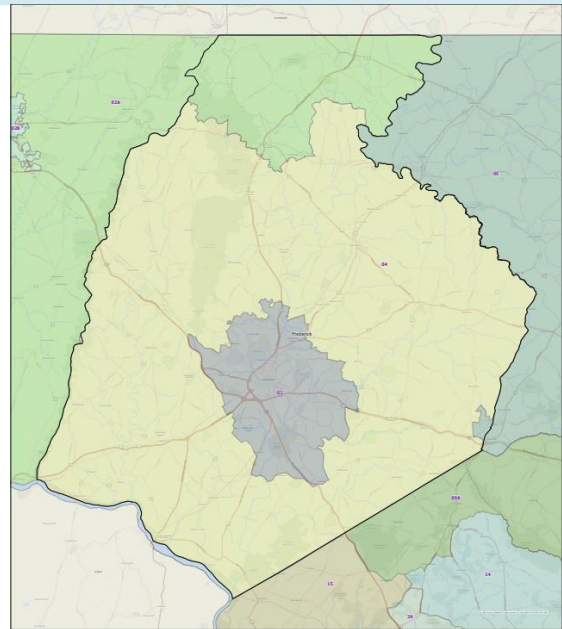
Schools including Yellow Springs ES, Ballenger Creek ES, Middletown ES and MS, Spring Ridge ES, Monocacy ES, and Urbana ES will receive state funds for capital improvements.

FREDERICK COUNTY IN ANNAPOLIS

FREDERICK COUNTY DELEGATION

This was the first legislative session in the 4-year team and the first session with newly drawn legislative districts. The new legislative maps changed how many legislative districts are in Frederick County. Our Delegation now includes 4 legislative districts, Districts 2, 3, 4, and 5, though Districts 2 and 5 also include large portions of Washington and Carroll Counties, respectively. This map shows the legislative districts and the Frederick County line.

I encourage all Frederick County residents to find their legislative representatives by going to [Members - Find My Representatives \(maryland.gov\)](#). These elected officials represent your voice in Annapolis and can assist with issues with state services. Their offices also offer scholarships for students attending a Maryland college or university.



You can learn more about your representatives, including what bills they sponsored and voted on, at the Maryland General Assembly website, www.mgaleg.maryland.gov.

FREDERICK NIGHT IN ANNAPOLIS!



In February, Frederick County teamed up with Frederick City to host Frederick Night in Annapolis! This event aimed to connect County and City staff to decision-makers in Annapolis to share information about our capital projects and policy priorities. We had a great turnout and it was a pleasure showing off all that Frederick County has to offer!

FREDERICK COUNTY PRIORITIES

COUNTY LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE

Through a process started by my predecessor, County Executive Jan Gardner, the County identified several legislative priorities for the General Assembly session.

The County's Legislative Package includes three (3) proposed bills from the County Executive:

1. Forest Mitigation Banks – Forest Conservation Fund
2. Labor and Employment - Lie Detector Tests
3. Education – Frederick County – Career Exploration & Development Activities – Sale of Coffee

The County's Legislative Package includes a proposed bill from the County Council:

Frederick County – Marriage License Fee Increase

The County's Legislative Package includes the following position statement:

Support for additional reporting requirements to the General Assembly on the Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Pilot Program.

The County's Legislative Package includes twelve (12) requests from the public.

The full package of legislative priorities and input can be found [on the website here](#).

FOREST CONSERVATION ACT

Our team proposed a bill to make minor changes to the Forest Conservation Act and Fund to better align the program with our County's needs. Our proposed bill restored the ability of local jurisdictions to preserve existing forests and provided a more viable timeline for reforestation and afforestation projects that used Forest Conservation Funds. We worked closely with other Counties, the bill sponsor Del. Ken Kerr, and the sponsors of a larger Forest Conservation Act reform bill to pass legislation that brings more local autonomy and flexibility to the Forest Conservation Act (FCA) while also moving our state towards a no-net-loss policy for forests. Thank you to Del. Kerr for his sponsorship of our bill, which was fully enveloped in the larger FCA reform bill.



Our forests and tree canopy is an important natural resource that provides ecological, recreational, and health benefits for our entire community. In our advocacy, we stressed the importance of balancing a strong conservation policy with the need for local control and flexibility of land use decisions. It was also important that the policy did not penalize small businesses with stringent regulations, so our legislative affairs team advocated for amendments to exempt Christmas tree farms and orchards from the Forest Conservation requirements.

This bill went through many changes and negotiations between the bill sponsors, conservation advocates like the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and local governments. HUGE thank you to FCG Staff Mike Wilkins (Division of Planning and Permitting), Shannon Moore (Division of Energy and Environment), and Dawn Ashbacher (Division of Energy and Environment) for working hand-in-hand with our legislative affairs team to ensure the final version of the bill is compatible with the planning and permitting processes in Frederick County and the sustainability goals of our administration!

This bill, SB 526/ HB 723, passed with bipartisan support and awaits the Governor's signature!

CAREER EXPLORATION & DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES – SALE OF COFFEE

This bill (HB 222) would have amended a current law that allows Baltimore County high school students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to participate in a supervised career exploration and development activity to apply also to Frederick County Public Schools. The current program, which has been successful in Baltimore County, allows students with IEPs to organize and run a coffee shop open only to fellow students, teachers, and staff for a few hours during the school week. By aligning the activity with the student's IEP goals, students can build social-emotional skills and interact with a broader range of peer students.

Frederick County has observed the success of this program in Baltimore County and would like to offer this opportunity to students with IEPs in Frederick County Public Schools, so educators have one more tool in their toolbox to help students reach their full potential. This bill was introduced by Del. Ken Kerr and after receiving unanimous support from the Frederick County Delegation it became a delegation bill.

Unfortunately, the legislative session adjourned before this bill was able to receive a final vote.

WORKING WITH THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) is the non-profit, non-partisan voice of all 24 Maryland counties promoting effective, efficient government through advocacy, education, and collaboration. The Association's membership consists of county elected officials and representatives from Maryland's 23 counties and Baltimore City. Our office worked closely with MACo throughout the session on several important bills.

Each year, MACo establishes legislative initiatives based on the needs of local government. This year, MACo advocated for:

- Centralized resources for body-worn cameras
- Revenue sharing and local opt-out authority for adult use of cannabis
- Fire recruitment and retention
- Transparency in education spending

STRENGTHENING FIREFIGHTING AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES IN MARYLAND



We worked closely with MACO on SB 414/HB 788 - Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting and Emergency Medical Services Within Maryland. This bill establishes a commission to study recruitment and retention strategies for firefighting roles. Our Fire Chief and Director of Fire and Rescue Services Tom Coe testified in support of this bill in the Senate and in the House.

The bill was amended to include studying recruitment and retention strategies for Emergency Medical Services as well as firefighting roles. This legislation garnered widespread support and passed unanimously in both chambers!

BILLS TO HIGHLIGHT

As the County Executive of Frederick County, I also lent my support to bills that would improve the function of Frederick County Government and the well-being of our residents. The General Assembly considered bills dealing with many important issues, including minimum wage, gun safety, recreational cannabis, child abuse, traffic safety, tax law, and much more. You can learn more about these issues and the laws that passed at the Maryland General Assembly website or in your legislative representatives' end-of-session letter.

Frederick County Government weighed in on over 80 bills. A few bills we supported include:

Electricity – Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Program (HB 908/ SB 613) – This bill makes the MD Community Solar pilot program a permanent program and makes improvements to the implementation of the program. Many Frederick County residents have benefitted from the Community Solar Pilot Program and have advocated for it to become a permanent program. This bill was an expressed priority of the Sierra Club Catoclin Group and the Frederick County Sustainability Commission. We are thrilled that this bill passed and community solar is now a permanent program in Maryland!

Family Prosperity Act of 2023 (HB 547/SB 552) – This bill addresses family poverty and child hunger head-on with a permanent extension and expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and an expansion of the Child Tax Credit. Based on the most recent United Way of Frederick ALICE report, 40% of our county residents do not meet a survival budget, struggling to afford housing, food, childcare, transportation, and healthcare. I supported this bill because the EITC and the Child Tax Credit are tools that are proven to effectively tackle poverty and economic instability. This bill was signed into law by Governor Moore on April 11!

Child Victims Act of 2023 (HB1/ SB686) – This bill has been a proposed measure under consideration for several years in Annapolis but has finally passed this year! This bill removes the statute of limitations on child sex abuse and allows survivors to sue their abusers and the institution where the abuse took place. Its passage coincides with the release of an extensive report from the Attorney General's Office regarding abuse in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Transportation – Assaults on Public Transit Operators – Report (HB 1049/SB 693) – This bipartisan bill directs the Maryland Transit Administration to report on assaults on public transit operators. This report, which will include information about assaults that occurred over the prior year as well as best practices to prevent such assaults, will go to General Assembly leaders as well as County Executives and State Attorneys. Our FCG Transit Services team testified in support of this bill and it passed both chambers and awaits approval from the Governor!

9-8-8 Trust – Funding (HB 271/SB3) –The new 9-8-8 National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline provides a direct connection to support for Marylanders experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis, having thoughts of suicide, or needing assistance in supporting someone who may need crisis response. Frederick County has been working closely with local, state, and federal partners to build a crisis response system that meets the needs of our community. This includes the creation of a Frederick County Crisis Stabilization Center and coordination with the Mental Health Association, Frederick County Health Department, the Local Behavioral Health Authority, and Emergency Management. Last year, the Maryland General Assembly passed SB241, which established the 9-8-8 trust fund and appropriated funding for fiscal years 2023 and 2024. HB271 ensures this crucial funding continues in the fiscal year 2025.

Environment - On-Farm Composting Facilities - Permit Exemption (HB 253/SB 262) – This bill was a priority for the Maryland Farm Bureau and the Frederick County Farm Bureau. This bill expands the

footprint of on-farm compost facilities with an MDE-issued permit from the current 5,000 square feet or less to 40,000 square feet or less if the facility meets other conditions for a permit exemption. Frederick County's permitting and land use policies allow for limited food waste composting as an agricultural activity of up to 5 acres without a site plan approval or up to 10 acres for commercial activity with a site plan approval. Our Food Waste Composting zoning ordinance was updated in 2018 to help streamline the process and make food waste composting more accessible for our local farmers. The changes proposed in SB262 would support this effort to reduce barriers to food waste composting. This bipartisan bill passed and awaits approval from Governor Moore.

SERVE Act of 2023 (HB 546/SB 551) – This bill was a priority of Governor Moore and creates a Service Year Program for recent high school graduates and other individuals to promote volunteerism in the state. This bill coincides with the Governor's new Department of Service and Civic Innovation. For one year, participants would work 30 hours a week alongside an on-site mentor at a participating employer with an hourly wage of \$15. As a proponent of volunteerism and public service, I am excited to support this program and look forward to working with participants.

Environment – Reducing Packaging Materials – Producer Responsibility (HB 284/SB 222) – This bill seeks to hold packaging material producers accountable for the disposition of their products. This will be accomplished through the establishment of a producer responsibility plan which will be developed in consultation with the producer responsibility organization. Local governments could then request reimbursement from the packaging producers that have an approved plan. This policy would help alleviate some of the costs local governments face in dealing with single-use plastics and waste. After many amendments and a conference committee to finalize revisions, this bill passed and is headed to the Governor!

Maryland Historic Trust – Historic Preservation Partnership Program and Fund – Established (HB 674/SB 425) – This bill expands the Historic Preservation Partnership Fund to help nonprofits and owners of historic properties rehabilitate, restore, and preserve historic properties. Frederick County contains a wealth of historic resources including pre-historic archeological sites, historic farmsteads, bridges, and rural villages. I was proud to have County staff testify in support of this bill and am excited that it passed both chambers.

Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund - Revisions and Sunset Repeal (Rural Communities Improvement Act of 2023) (HB 695) – This bill modifies the existing Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund to include grant opportunities to include agricultural development, cooperative development, and workforce development. This change, which passed both chambers unanimously, will greatly benefit Frederick County by supporting economic growth, workforce development, and entrepreneurship.

Maryland Health Benefit Exchange – State-Based Young Adult Health Insurance Subsidies Pilot Program – Sunset Repeal (HB 814/SB 601) – This bill removed the sunset on a law passed by the MGA in 2021 that enacted a subsidies law that invested up to \$20 million per year for two years to help lower-income young adults ages 18-34 purchase health coverage. This healthcare program helped thousands of young adults in Frederick County and across the state enroll in insurance coverage. I was proud to support the removal of the sunset on this pilot program and am pleased that it passed both chambers.

Maryland Educator Shortage Act of 2023 (HB 1219) – This bill would task the State Department of Education and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to create goals to recruit and retain Maryland teachers. As a teacher, I know firsthand how impactful the educator staffing shortages have been for our schools and students. I am excited to see this legislation pass.

These are just a few of the many bills that the Maryland General Assembly passed.

THANK YOU, TEAM FCG!

The Maryland General Assembly legislative session started only 1 month after I was sworn into office. To say we hit the ground running is an understatement! Our Legislative Affairs team could not have had such a successful legislative session without the help of our incredible FCG staff. My legislative director launched an FCG Legislative Committee with representatives from all divisions and allied organizations in Frederick County Government. This group of dedicated staff employees served as consultants, subject matter experts, and dedicated teammates throughout the session. Thank you to all members of the FCG Legislative Committee and the many staff members throughout FCG who helped represent Frederick County in Annapolis!

Thank you, Team FCG

Animal Control Division

David Luckenbaugh

Board of Elections

Barbara Wagner

Budget Office

Janice Spiegel

Kelly Weaver

Circuit Court

Judy Lohman

Citizen Services Division

Susan Brown

Robin Grove

Christine Kay

Kelli Goetz

Communications and Public Engagement Office

Vivian Laxton

County Attorney

Bryon Black

Wendy Kearney

Catherine Keller

Economic and Workforce Development Office

Jodie Bollinger

Emergency Management Division

Heidi Keeney

Jack Markey

Energy and Environment Division

Dawn Ashbacher
Kristin Mielcarek
Shannon Moore
Finance Division
Diane Fox
Erin White

Fire and Rescue Services Division
Thomas Coe

Health Services Division
Barbara Brookmyer

Human Resources Division
Kristin Bradenburg
Robert Goff
Shannon Powell

Interagency Information Technologies Division
Nick Hetrick
David Maginnis

Library Operations
James Kelly

Office of the County Executive
Lori Depies
Joy Schaefer

Parks & Recreation Division
Bob Hick
Jeremy Kortright

Planning and Permitting Division
Anne Bradley
Tolson DeSa
Gary Hessong
Steve Horn
Mark Mishler
Michael Wilkins

Procurement and Contracting Office
Diane Fouche

Public Works Division
Bret Fouche
Tyler Muntz
Jason Stitt

Risk Management Office

Lauren Vandergrift

Senior Services Division

Carolyn True

Sheriff's Office

Robin McCutcheon

Renee Willar

Sophia Comert

Solid Waste and Recycling Division

Phil Harris

Lee Zimmerman

State's Attorney's Office

Joyce King

Transit Services Division

Jaime McKay

Roman Steichen

Volunteer Fire & Rescue Services Division

Todd Johnson

Michael Darwick

Water and Sewer Division

Mark Schweitz