



2025 LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE

FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT



County Executive Jessica Fitzwater

Legislative Calendar 2024 - 2025

Date	Activity
Mid-June to Mid-July of 2024	Seek legislative ideas from Frederick County Divisions and Departments
Thursday, August 1, 2024	Seek legislative ideas by letter to partner organizations
Thursday, August 1, 2024	Ask for input and legislative specifics from municipal leaders - Mayors/Burgesses meeting
Tuesday, September 10, 2024	Overview of proposed legislative process/request legislative ideas and proposals from the County Council
Monday, October 7, 2024	County Executive to host a Town Hall meeting (1 st floor Winchester Hall) on proposed 2024 General Assembly Legislative Package
End of October	County Council Considers 2024 Legislative Package
November 2024	County Council Approval of Council's Legislative Initiatives for 2024 Legislative Package
Mid-November	Send Memo to State Delegation with Final Package
Saturday, December 7, 2024 10:00 a.m.	Delegation Public Hearing - Winchester Hall
Wednesday, January 8, 2025 Noon	First day of the 2025 session of the Maryland General Assembly

List of Organizations

The following organizations received a letter soliciting input on the Frederick County Legislative Package. This list was created using prior legislative outreach materials and the list of applicants to the Community Partnership Grant program in Frederick County.

- Adult Public Guardianship Review Board
- Advisory Plumbing Board
- Advocates for Homeless Families, Inc.
- Affordable Housing Council
- African American Resources Cultural and Heritage Society
- Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board
- Agricultural Reconciliation Committee
- Agriculture Business Council
- American Red Cross serving Montgomery, Howard and Frederick Counties
- Asian American Center of Frederick
- Association of Nigerians in Frederick
- Aushman Family Foundation
- Blessings in a Backpack, Frederick Maryland
- Board of Education of Frederick County
- Board of Elections
- Board of Gaming Appeals
- Board of Zoning Appeals
- Business and Industry Cabinet
- Catoctin & Frederick Soil
- Conservation Districts
- Centro Hispano de Frederick
- Chamber of Commerce of Frederick County
- Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership
- City of Brunswick
- City of Frederick
- City Youth Matrix
- Commission For Women
- Commission on Disabilities
- Containment Laboratory
- Community Advisory Committee
- Crossed BRIDGES
- Daybreak Adult Day Services, Inc
- Delaplaine Foundation
- Domestic Violence Coordinating Council
- Each 1 Teach 1, Inc
- Electrical Board
- Empowering Community Leaders Network, Inc.
- Endangered Species Theatre Project
- Equity and Inclusion Commission
- Ethics Commission
- Farm Bureau of Frederick County, Inc.
- Fire and Rescue Advisory Board
- Fort Detrick Alliance
- Frederick Arts Council
- Frederick Book Arts Center Inc
- Frederick Community College
- Frederick Community College Board of Trustees
- Frederick County Association of Realtors, Inc.
- Frederick County Building Industry Association
- Frederick County Public Schools
- Frederick County Volunteer
- Fire & Rescue Association, Inc.
- Frederick Health Hospice
- Frederick Regional Youth Orchestra
- Fredericktowne Players
- Get Kids Outside
- Girls on the Run
- Global Necessity Corporation
- Golden Care of Frederick
- Heartly House, Inc.
- Historic Preservation Commission
- Hood College
- Housing Authority of the City of Frederick
- Human Relations Commission
- I Believe in Me Inc.
- Immigrant Affairs Commission
- Insurance Committee
- Interagency Internal Audit Authority
- Interfaith Housing Alliance, Inc.
- Justice and Recovery Advocates, Inc.
- Justice Jobs of Maryland, Inc.
- Lake Linganore Association, Inc.
- Lead4Life, Inc.
- League of Women Voters of Frederick County
- Literacy Council of Frederick County
- Living Well Youth Works
- Local Management Board
- Maryland Legal Aid
- Mental Health Advisory Committee
- Mental Health Association
- Mission of Mercy
- Mobilize Frederick
- Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense
- Mount Saint Mary's University
- On Our Own of Frederick County

Parks and Recreation Commission
Partners In Care Maryland Maryland, Inc.
Phoenix Foundation of Maryland
Planning Commission
Police Accountability Board
PTA Council of Frederick County
Public Library Board
Rebuilding Together Frederick County, MD, Inc.
Roads Board of Frederick County
Safe Ride Foundation Inc.
Senior Services Advisory Board
Seton Center Inc.
Sierra Club Catoctin Group
SOAR, Supporting Older Adults through
Resources, Inc.
Social Services Board
Solid Waste Advisory Committee
Spanish Speaking Community of Maryland, Inc.
STEM ENABLE INC
Student Homelessness Initiative Partnership of
Frederick County, Inc.
Substance Abuse Council
Sustainability Commission
Sustainable Monocacy Commission
Technology Council of Frederick County
The Arc of Frederick County
The Birthing Circle Inc.
The Community Foundation of Frederick County
The Delaplaine Arts Center, Inc.
The Frederick Center, Inc.
The Frederick Children's Chorus
The Global Z Recording Project
The Religious Coalition for Emergency Human
Needs in Frederick County, Inc.
Tourism Council of Frederick County, Inc.
Town of Burkittsville
Town of Emmitsburg
Town of Middletown
Town of Mount Airy
Town of Myersville
Town of New Market
Town of Thurmont
Town of Walkersville
Town of Woodsboro
Transformative Arts Project
Transportation Services Advisory Council
Turner Boxing Club's Youth & Development
Program
United Way of Frederick County, Inc.
Veterans Advisory Council
Village of Rosemont
Way Station, Inc.
Whole Heart Grief & Life Resource Center
Woman to Woman Mentoring, Inc.
Women's Giving Circle
Workforce Development Board
YMCA of Frederick County

Proposed Legislation



JESSICA FITZWATER

**COUNTY EXECUTIVE
FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND**

PRIORITY LEGISLATION

Corrugated Stainless Steel Tubing – Safety Standards

To improve building safety and protect Maryland residents and first responders, I urge the Maryland General Assembly to pass legislation that requires Corrugated Stainless Steel Tubing (CSST) to meet a standard that can withstand 24-28 Coulombs.

Corrugated Stainless Steel Tubing (CSST) is a product used to deliver propane and methane gas in homes across the country and is prone to malfunction that can cause gas leaks and fires. These leaks and fires often occur when the CSST product is struck by lightning. Maryland has taken action to address CSST malfunction and improve safety. Steps have been taken along the way in Maryland to make this product safer, including prohibiting the use of non-arc-resistant CSST in Maryland in 2022.

While arc-resistant CSST is marginally safer than traditional CSST, its rating is only sufficient for up to 4.5 Coulombs, based on test charges. The average lightning strike in the US is approximately 24-28 Coulombs but can be much higher.¹ The LC1027 standard has a rating sufficient for the average lightning strike, with tests at 36 Coulombs. This standard provides evidence that there are CSST products that are capable of withstanding the average lightning strike.

In 2016 the International Code Council, in partnership with the Fire Service Membership Council and the National Association of State Fire Marshals, unanimously endorsed ICC LC1027. The Fire Marshal, firefighters, fire investigators, and engineers have identified the LC1027 standard as a way to meaningfully improve safety. This standard should serve as a roadmap to designing legislation to require lightning resistant CSST.

This issue is particularly important to Frederick County because the lightning-induced failure of CSST was a contributing factor in the line-of-duty death of Frederick County Captain Josh Laird. Improving the safety of buildings in Maryland, and therefore mitigating the risks presented to our firefighters and other first responders, is a fitting and imperative way to honor the legacy of Captain Josh Laird.

¹ International Symposium on Fire Investigation Science and Technology



JESSICA FITZWATER

COUNTY EXECUTIVE
FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

PRIORITY LEGISLATION

State-Wide Implementation of Family Connects

As we work to improve healthcare statewide, taking a close look at maternal and infant health is a crucial way to reduce disparities and improve long-term outcomes. The Maryland General Assembly should implement the Family Connects program state-wide to increase maternal and infant health.

Frederick County's Family Connects model offers all families with newborns a home visit with a registered nurse at no charge, with the goal of improving population-level health. The universally offered voluntary visit occurs when the baby is about three weeks old. The nurse does a comprehensive assessment with a risk rating of the family across 12 factors of maternal health, infant health, household safety, and parent wellbeing. Based on risk and needs, the family receives personalized resources and additional targeted services. Families may receive up to three more visits during the 12 weeks after delivery. The universal approach – unique among home visiting models – reduces stigma and increases participation.

Beginning on January 1, 2023, Frederick Health implemented Family Connects for Frederick County residents delivering at the hospital with seed-funding from County-allocated American Rescue Plan Act grant funds. In the first 15 months, the team visited 1630 or 65% of the 2500 eligible families, proportionately representing all races, ethnicities and insurance types.

Frederick County families have reported life-saving interventions – guided by their nurse – for high blood pressure, postpartum depression and anxiety, and infant respiratory distress. They have reported increased access to mental and maternal health care and better connections to community resources for breastfeeding, nutrition, diapers, support groups, and childcare. With the success of the local program, as well as two other local programs within the state, Maryland has a guide to implementing this initiative statewide and reducing maternal and infant health disparities.

I look forward to partnering with the State to develop a dedicated, sustainable funding plan to offer the Family Connects model to all Marylanders and thereby reduce maternal health disparities and improve maternal and child health outcomes for all.



JESSICA FITZWATER

COUNTY EXECUTIVE
FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

PRIORITY LEGISLATION

Code Amendment – Out of Court Statements

Frederick County is proud to have a Child Advocacy Center (CAC) that among other services, conducts interviews with children who have been the victims of or witnesses to crime. This Center provides a low-stress and comforting environment for children who have recently been through a traumatic experience and allows them to give an interview in this safe space. Currently, our CAC only has one part time staff member that is permitted to obtain court admissible interviews, leaving children who enter the CAC on days the staff member is absent unable to provide an interview in this safe environment that would be admissible in court.

Currently, only a handful of professionals are allowed to conduct interviews with children that are admissible in court. These professions include physicians, psychologists, nurses, social workers, principals (or other school staff), counselors, and therapists. However, this leaves interviews conducted by forensic interviewers as inadmissible in court, causing the potential for children to be required to withstand the traumatic experience of testifying in an in-person courtroom.

To allow for a State code amendment that expands the list of qualified professionals to perform interviews with children that produce out of court statements admissible in court, the Maryland General Assembly should pass legislation that authorizes a forensic interviewer to conduct admissible out of court interviews.

By expanding the list of those qualified to conduct out of court interviews to forensic interviewers, children who enter our CAC would always have a qualified staff member to perform court admissible interviews. This would ensure that children are not forced to go through the traumatic experience of testifying in court, often in the same room as their abuser. Requiring children to testify in court extends their traumatic experience, and sometimes leaves cases to go to settlement due to the child's inability to share their story in this high stress environment.

We all want what is best for our children, and taking any step we can to prevent a traumatic experience should be a top priority. Passing legislation to allow for this flexibility in qualified interviewers is crucial to ensuring children are able to tell their story in a safe and comfortable environment.



JESSICA FITZWATER

COUNTY EXECUTIVE
FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

PRIORITY LEGISLATION

Property Tax – County Authority to Set Special Rates

To allow for the County to enhance revenue for school construction and transportation improvements, the Maryland General Assembly should pass legislation that authorizes a County to set special tax rates for financing local infrastructure.

Currently, counties do not have the authority to set special property tax rates for subclasses of property such as different residential and commercial properties. While property taxes are the main source of revenue for local governments, we face heightened pressure from our constituents to keep rates low as assessment values increase and inflation impacts their household budgets. As County Executive, I aim to keep the cost of living in Frederick County affordable, while also maintaining our critical infrastructure such as schools and transportation.

By allowing local governments to set special property tax rates for different types of residential and commercial property, Frederick County will have the opportunity to lessen the burden of our residents. The County will be able to do this by increasing the commercial tax base for commercial entities that can afford to pay a higher rate, and lowering taxes for residents who are paying more than their fair share.

While we strive to meet the goals of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, build and renovate schools, and maintain our transportation infrastructure, counties need the ability to raise revenue from the commercial tax base. By allowing for this flexibility, residents will receive the same public facing services at a lower personal cost. Passing legislation to allow for this flexibility is crucial to ensuring needs are met without overburdening Marylanders.

Position Statements



JESSICA FITZWATER

**COUNTY EXECUTIVE
FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND**

POSITION STATEMENT

State School Capital Improvement Program

County Position: Support increased investment

As Frederick County Executive, and in partnership with Frederick County Public Schools Board of Education and Superintendent Dr. Dyson, I urge the Maryland General Assembly to increase funding for the State Capital Improvement Program for public schools in order to meet existing commitments to provide high-quality teaching and learning environments for all of Maryland's students and to implement the requirements of the Blueprint for Education.

In FY 2026 and beyond, the State should provide a minimum of \$618 million in State Capital Improvement Program funding and establish an annual inflationary adjustment to be added to the base State Capital Improvement Program funding beginning in FY 2027. The inflationary adjustment should be commensurate with the cost per square foot adjustment, expressed as a percentage, approved annually by the Interagency Commission on School Construction.

Maryland is committed to providing quality teaching and learning environments for all of Maryland's students and maintaining Maryland's existing inventory of school facilities. As the benchmarks of Maryland's Blueprint for Education approach, the state must also support local governments and local education agencies in meeting these commitments with adequate facility space. Therefore, state capital improvement funding must not only adjust for inflation, but also account for the costs associated with providing new educational space to fulfill the requirements in Maryland's Blueprint for Education.

The increase to \$618 million for the State Capital Improvement Program, with an annual inflation factor escalation, will provide additional funding for the programmatic space needed to implement the Blueprint for Education requirements while maintaining necessary resources for other funding categories, such as the Built to Learn school construction program, the Healthy Schools program, the Aging Schools program, the Enrollment Growth and Relocatable Classroom program, and other school construction funding programs.

As an educator for 17 years, I understand first-hand the importance of investing in our school facilities. Furthermore, as the County Executive of one of the fastest growing county and school systems in the state, I intimately understand the financial challenges of building and maintaining the complex learning environments needed to teach all students in today's education system. State partnership, particularly in the form of increased capital improvement funding, is crucial for the success of our Maryland schools.



JESSICA FITZWATER

**COUNTY EXECUTIVE
FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND**

POSITION STATEMENT

Coordination with the Maryland Association of Counties

County Position: Support

As the Frederick County Executive and member of the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Legislative Committee, I work closely with MACo on a wide variety of issues. I intend to support their upcoming 2025 Legislative Priorities, although as of October 3rd, these have not yet been released. Through conversations in the interim, I believe that MACo's advocacy will center on several matters including transportation, County land use control of solar, and funding and implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Transportation

Counties have been severely impacted by the cuts in the Consolidated Transportation Program. As MACo is a strong advocate for county infrastructure, it is anticipated that increasing our local share of transportation funding will be a top priority in 2025. The safety improvements to US 15 remains Frederick County's top transportation priority.

Solar and County Land Use Control

Throughout 2024, key stakeholders, including the Gov. Wes Moore Administration, the environmental community, the renewable energy industry, and local governments, including Frederick County planning staff, have been developing legislation to address the need for additional solar development while balancing local land use decisions. I will work diligently alongside MACo to advocate for state-level policies that allow local governments to preserve agricultural lands and site renewable energy systems in areas that are most compatible for this use, such as on brownfields and near transmission lines.

Blueprint Funding and Implementation

As a former educator, I am always supportive of initiatives to help our students and teachers thrive. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future was a great step towards doing this, however, many of the initiatives do not have clear guidance or are currently unfunded. It is my hope that MACo will be able to work with jurisdictions to advocate for legislation that will assist counties in fulfilling the Blueprint.

MACo's legislative priorities offer several policy areas where the General Assembly can work in partnership with their local elected leaders to address issues impacting their shared constituencies. I urge the General Assembly to prioritize these initiatives in the 2025 legislative session.



JESSICA FITZWATER

**COUNTY EXECUTIVE
FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND**

POSITION STATEMENT

Speed Monitoring Systems – Agencies – Statements and Certificates of Violations

County Position: Support

As the use of speed camera programs helps to improve the safety of pedestrians and drivers alike, it is important that local jurisdictions are able to streamline their use. The General Assembly should pass legislation to allow trained municipal personnel, in addition to a law enforcement officer, to approve or deny speed camera citations.

Currently, all speed camera citations must be reviewed by a law enforcement officer. This means that municipalities that do not have their own police force are unable to use speed cameras as they do not have a qualified staff member to review them. By allowing a trained municipal staff member to approve or deny these citations all municipalities will be able to implement speed cameras and improve their safety. This will also assist in lessening the administrative burden of law enforcement agencies that currently review speed camera citations. For these reasons, several municipal leaders throughout Frederick County have advocated for the passage of this legislation.

Speed cameras have been proven to change driver behavior, resulting in lower vehicle speeds in the surrounding area. This makes them a vital tool in improving pedestrian and driver safety, one that all municipalities should have access to. Currently, trained municipal personnel are permitted to approve or deny red-light and work zone speed cameras. By expanding this to general speed cameras, municipalities will be empowered to improve safety in critical pedestrian zones such as school areas, and free up law enforcement officers to focus on other urgent priorities.

Passing this legislation, introduced as HB 282 in 2024, will assist our municipalities in improving their safety and lessen burdens on our law enforcement agencies.

Requests from the Public

During the months of August, September, and October, the Office of the County Executive solicited ideas and input from roughly 150 external organizations, including our local school system, institutions of higher education, local nonprofit organizations, neighborhood associations, and more.

We received 40 requests from the public. Requests ranged from broad ideas to fully drafted legislative language. Many organizations submitted similar ideas and voiced support for similar initiatives.

The full packet of requests from the public, including requests made at or after the October 7th Town Hall, can be viewed on the Legislative Affairs page of the Frederick County Government Website at <https://www.frederickcountymd.gov/3323/Legislative-Affairs>