

## **2026 Legislative Package**

### Public Requests for Legislation and Position Statements

As of September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025

In response to a solicitation sent to over 100 organizations, all Frederick County Board, Commissions, and advisory councils, and all 12 municipalities, the following organizations sent a variety of requests related to the legislative changes or suggestions.

We sent letters soliciting input on our legislative package to organizations that had previously submitted proposals to the County (including for legislative sessions during prior administrations), as well as to organizations that applied for Community Partnership Grants in 2025. A full list of organizations who received a solicitation letter can be found as an Appendix.

**Proposals from Frederick County Boards, Commissions, and Advisory  
Councils:**

**Organization:** Frederick County Affordable Housing Council

**Submitted by:** Chair, Mary Ellen Mitchell and Vice Chair, Michael Hatfield

## FREDERICK COUNTY AFFORDABLE HOUSING COUNCIL

August 18, 2025

The Honorable Jessica Fitzwater  
Frederick County Executive  
Winchester Hall  
12 East Church Street  
Frederick, Maryland 21701

Re: 2026 Legislative and Policy Considerations- Affordable Housing Council Input

Dear County Executive Fitzwater:

The Frederick County Affordable Housing Council (“AHC”) appreciates your proactive engagement with our Council as you prepare for the 2026 legislative session. We also appreciate your ongoing efforts to implement and consider policies that are supportive of affordable housing in our community. Examples include the ongoing County Housing Needs Assessment; increasing monies under the Housing Initiative Fund; the creation of Frederick County as an “entitlement community” under the Community Development Block Grant program; and ongoing efforts to streamline zoning and processing requirements to expedite affordable housing production. For fiscal year 2026, AHC has two recommendations for legislative consideration, and several suggestions for policy consideration or review.

### A. *Legislative*

#### 1. Sustain Housing Assistance Programs

AHC recommends at a minimum, level State funding for housing assistance programs to prevent evictions and provide stability for vulnerable populations. The State’s Rental Housing Program Fund aims to rehabilitate and create rental housing, noting also that specific programs exist for non-profits developing elderly housing. The loss of any Federal HOME funds makes the State’s level funding efforts especially important.

#### 2. Workforce Development in Construction and the Building Trades

One of the biggest challenges nationally is recruiting enough laborers and skilled workers to build new units. The state could work with community colleges to expand construction workforce programs to grow the necessary labor supply.

### B. *Policy*

We have the following recommendations with regard to policy or administrative procedures. These recommendations are as follows:

#### 1. Address the Senior Housing Needs Gap

Advocate to the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development to re-introduce Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LITHC) for senior housing in the State’s Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP). Frederick County’s aging population requires affordable housing options tailored to their specific needs.

2. Review of State Environmental Laws to Advance Affordable Housing

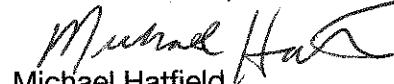
This AHC recommendation does not propose any specific changes to State law or regulations at this time. Rather, it recommends that the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and other applicable agencies charged with the administration and enforcement of State environmental laws, collectively establish an “ad hoc affordable housing review committee” with appropriate local government and private sector representation to accomplish the following: To promote affordable housing by finding reasonable and responsible avenues to reduce timing and financial burdens arising from the state’s many environmental protections, approval requirements, processes and procedures. The goal is to responsibly review, revise or eliminate long-standing development barriers that hinder the expeditious production of affordable housing and supporting infrastructure. Based upon findings and required consensus, further actions could be recommended at either the legislative and/or regulatory level in the future. A timeline should be established by the “ad hoc committee” for final consideration of recommendations.

The Affordable Housing Council firmly believes that advocating for resources to address these needs is an integral part of a comprehensive strategy to tackle Frederick County’s affordable housing challenges as is summarized in the 2023 Transition Committee report under Housing and Quality of Life and elsewhere. AHC will also continue through the upcoming fiscal year to advise on critical affordable housing issues as they emerge.

Sincerely,



Mary Ellen Mitchell  
Chair  
Frederick County Affordable Housing Council



Michael Hatfield  
Vice Chair  
Frederick County Affordable Housing Council

**Organization:** Frederick County Historic Preservation Commission

**Submitted by:** Staff liaison, Amanda Whitmore



## FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

### DIVISION OF PLANNING & PERMITTING

Livable Frederick Planning & Design Office

Jessica Fitzwater  
County Executive

Deborah A. Carpenter, AICP, Division Director  
Kimberly Gaines, Director

August 29, 2025

Jessica Fitzwater, County Executive  
Winchester Hall  
12 E. Church Street  
Frederick, MD 21701

Re: 2026 State Legislative Initiatives

Dear County Executive Fitzwater,

At their August 6, 2025 regular meeting, the Historic Preservation Commission approved forwarding the following for your consideration regarding the County's legislative package for the 2026 General Assembly Session.

- Support increasing or, at the minimum, maintaining current funding levels to the State's historic preservation grant programs. These grant programs are important for preserving and interpreting historic sites throughout the State. However, the amount of grant requests far outweighs the amount of funding available. Typically, Frederick County averages about one awardee per program per year.

The Historic Preservation Capital Grant Program is currently funded at \$600,000 to support capital upgrade projects on certified historic structures state-wide with each applicant able to request up to \$100,000.

The Historic Preservation Non-Capital Research and Survey Grant Program is currently funded at \$300,000 to support architectural and archeological research, survey and documentation, public education, and planning and feasibility projects state-wide with each applicant able to request up to \$75,000.

The African American Heritage Grant Program is currently funded at \$5 million to support capital upgrade projects on sites representing African American historical experiences with each applicant able to request up to \$250,000.

- Support funding the State's Barn Preservation Fund. The bill to create this fund was passed in 2006 and amended in 2015 but has yet to be allocated any funding. This fund would be used to preserve historic barns and agricultural structures in the State. The Fiscal and Policy Notes for House Bill 699 indicate that the fund would require approximately \$300,000 to begin to address the demand for barn preservation. While Frederick County has created the Rural Historic Preservation Grant Program to support preservation of historic resources such as barns and other agricultural outbuildings, the Barn Preservation Fund would

provide an additional funding source to meet the needs of preserving these historic resources.

- Support the reintroduction of SB 980 to increase funding levels for the Maryland Heritage Areas Program. This program supports capital and non-capital projects within the boundaries of a heritage area and with a clear heritage tourism component. The annual maximum funding for this program is \$6 million and SB 980 would have increased that limit to \$12 million. Parts of Frederick County are included within the boundary of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (HCWHA), which encompasses areas of Washington, Frederick, and Carroll Counties. The HCWHA routinely has one of the largest applicant pools of all the heritage areas seeking funding from this program.
- Support legislation for increased protection of cemeteries, especially orphaned cemeteries (cemeteries without clear ownership).
- Support the creation of the *Maryland Smart Growth Investment Fund*, which was proposed in the 2018 legislative session (SB3/HB117) but did not pass, and the funding needed to support its execution.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the legislative process. If you have any questions, please contact me at 301-600-1147 or [awhitmore@frederickcountymd.gov](mailto:awhitmore@frederickcountymd.gov).

Sincerely,



Amanda K. Whitmore  
Historic Preservation Planner

**Organization:** Frederick County Senior Services Advisory Board

**Submitted by:** Chair, Barbara Angleberger



**Frederick County  
Senior Services Advisory Board**  
1440 Taney Avenue  
Frederick, MD 21702  
301-600-1234 Fax: 301-600-3554

September 3, 2025

Jessica Fitzwater, Frederick County Executive  
Frederick County Government  
Winchester Hall  
12 East Church Street  
Frederick, MD 21701

Dear County Executive Fitzwater:

In response to your request for ideas and suggestions to Frederick County's legislative package for the 2026 General Assembly Session, the members of the Senior Services Advisory Board (SSAB) propose the following recommendations related to the most critical issues identified by seniors in recent surveys conducted by the SSAB.

We suggest that new legislation should prioritize the following areas of concern:

- Affordable accessible housing, including making universal design in new senior housing a priority so that older adults have the option of "aging in place."
- Identify bills, programs and regulations that encourage long term access to dwellings, including bills that support training programs for the building trades and expansion of Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) programs and in particular, Maryland's Independent Living Tax Credit.
- Support/advocate for efforts that implement the Longevity Ready Maryland blueprint, with special focus on those that:
  - Prepare Marylanders to afford longevity through improved access to affordable housing, health care and retirement planning.
  - Optimize health, wellness and mobility that benefits Marylanders of all ages through investments in nutrition, health literacy, outdoor spaces, public health and transportation infrastructures.

We urge the Frederick County Council and the Frederick County Delegation to support its 60,000+ seniors by drafting legislation that reflects the recommendations listed above, as well as any additional legislation aimed at enhancing the quality of life for senior citizens.

Thank you for your past support, for recognizing the unique needs of older adults and affording the SSAB the opportunity to provide input as you prepare the 2026 legislative package for the General Assembly.

With appreciation,

Frederick County Senior Services Advisory Board  
*Barbara Angleberger*  
Barbara Angleberger, Chair

CC: Leslie Barnes-Keating, Deputy Administrative Officer  
Carolyn True, Division Director  
Members of the Senior Services Advisory Board

**Organization:** Frederick County Sustainability Commission

**Submitted by:** Staff liaison, Nilima Rawal



## COMMISSION MEMBERS

Amy Rembold  
(Chair)

Rebecca Kraft  
(Vice Chair)

Laurie Jenkins  
(Secretary)

Carl Gallegos

Mark Sankey

Brad Crim

Jonathan Haywood

Evan Hull

Mitchel Jackson

Robert Robey

Renee Knapp  
Frederick County Council  
Liaison

## DIVISION OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Shannon Moore,  
Director

Nilima Rawal  
Commission  
Liaison



## FREDERICK COUNTY SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

Winchester Hall • 12 East Church Street • Frederick, Maryland 21701  
301-600-1413 • FAX: 301-600-2054 • TTY: Use Maryland Relay  
<https://frederickcountymd.gov/7609/Sustainability-Commission>

## 2026 Legislative Recommendations

### **Banning Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers**

More than 200 cities in the U.S. have restricted or banned the use of gas-powered leaf blowers and recently, Montgomery County, Maryland updated their noise law to address the environmental, noise, and health concerns related to gas-powered leaf blowers and leaf vacuums.

Gas-powered leaf blowers emit 23 times more carbon monoxide and 300 times more non-methane hydrocarbons than a typical older model car. Because the combustion process of the two-stroke engine, which burns a mixture of gasoline and oil, is so inefficient and without the pollution controls used on cars such as catalytic converters, more than 30 percent of that fuel is released unburnt as an aerosol of toxic fumes.

Effective **July 1, 2025**, the use of handheld, backpack, and walk-behind gas-powered leaf removal equipment is banned in Montgomery County. A violation can result in a **\$500 citation**. To help residents and businesses comply with the law, the County offers rebates on the purchase of new electric leaf blowers to address the environmental, noise, and health concerns related to gas-powered leaf blowers and leaf vacuums.

The law applies to private property, commercial property, local government and Montgomery County government. The law does not apply to Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery Parks, which are managed by the state of Maryland.

The ban on gas-powered leaf blowers reduces harmful air emissions and continued reliance on fossil fuels. It also lessens health impacts that contribute to hearing loss, cardiovascular and respiratory disease and other health issues.

### **Planting Native Landscapes in Government Facilities**

Native plants provide crucial habitat for our native insects, birds and mammals. As an increase in land is being developed, crucial habitat is being bulldozed and replaced with a moonscape landscape of turf. This landscaping practice provides no benefit to our native wildlife and many are currently threatened because of habitat loss.

The use of native plants not only increases biodiversity but also requires lower maintenance regarding water usage, pesticide usage and overall maintenance.

On February 21, 2025, Representatives Mikie Sherrill (NJ-11) and David Joyce (OH-14) reintroduced the Building Native Habitats at Federal Facilities Act, to promote the planting of native species in landscaping projects at federal buildings. Native plants are critical environmental resources because they protect animal habitats and food chains, help mitigate flooding by retaining and filtering stormwater, and are less costly to maintain.

According to Bradley Williams, Deputy Legislative Director at The Sierra Club, "Prioritizing the use of native plants at federal facilities is a no-brainer in promoting sustainability. Native plants are naturally adapted to local climates and reduce the need for excessive water, fertilizers, and pesticides, lowering maintenance costs and taxpayer burdens. They also provide crucial benefits for pollinators and wildlife, enhancing biodiversity and supporting ecosystem health."



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## 2026 Legislative Recommendations

### **Economic and Environmental Impact of Date Centers – Study**

Data centers consume electric energy to operate and water for cooling. The advance of computing technology to faster modes, called hyperscale, has significantly increased the amount of power and water required. The interest in advancing “artificial intelligence” (AI) is driving construction of new data centers. This has become the fastest rising business globally and Maryland wants to participate in this. Tax and other revenue, jobs, and economic growth will result. However, other costs including social and environmental will also result. Rate payers will be required to subsidize the data center industry through increased electric bills. This includes construction of new transmission lines and the cost to rehabilitate or upgrade power plants. Such impacts also affect economic health. As this is a rapidly growing industry, thorough studies are necessary to understand these impacts and guide policy.

Maryland does not generate any significant amount of the electric energy consumed within the state. That is provided by PJM Interconnection LLC who provides power to Maryland. PJM has acknowledged potential strain on the system due to data center demand. Construction of data centers in Maryland will have an indirect impact on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions via the emissions from the PJM generating mix. The GHG emissions will increase due to data center operation here.

A significant impact of data centers is water usage. Cooling requirements place a large demand on water supplies. Due to demand on the Potomac River watershed from Virginia data center construction and potential increase from Maryland, this may pose the greatest environmental impact. A comprehensive study must also address these impacts. During the recent legislative session, the Governor vetoed an economic study regarding data centers due to budget constraints. This study is essential for the State and especially Frederick County, to have the necessary information available as they navigate the maturation of the industry in the region.

A study is required to address the environmental impact as well as economic impact. The potential for environmental impact is strong enough that an Environmental Impact Assessment might be considered. The study and report should address the following in detail.

- Need for and routing of additional power lines.
- Cooling water demand and impact on the watershed including the Potomac River and aquifers.
- Noise level, attenuation, and vibration from normal operation.
- Use of diesel generators for backup power and related issues.
  - Noise levels and attenuation.
  - Air pollution controls for diesel generators and any other sources of emissions
  - Diesel fuel storage issues

### **Cryptocurrency Mining**

Along with analysis of the full economic and environmental impact of data center infrastructure and construction the effects of cryptocurrency mining is more pronounced. These computer operations have more extreme power demand and cooling requirements. A bill should address direct mining operations. This is to focus on entities whose business is more than 50% dedicated to cryptocurrency mining. Note that entities exist whose sole operation is to mine cryptocurrency. Some assessment should be applied to the industry. A power usage-based surcharge based on their high demand might be considered. They should not receive payment or benefit based on power supply contracts when required to shut down mining operations in order for the grid to avoid brownout or blackout.

**Organization:** Frederick County Veterans Advisory Council

**Submitted by:** Staff liaison, Michaela Browne



## Veterans Advisory Council

Frederick County Government  
Division of Aging and Independence



August 26, 2025

On behalf of the Frederick County Veterans Advisory Council, we thank County Executive Fitzwater for inviting us to provide legislative suggestions. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to share priorities that strengthen services and protections for Veterans and their families in Frederick County and across Maryland. The VAC has identified the following three legislative priorities for 2026:

### **1) Legislative Suggestion: State Funding to Improve PIT Survey Accuracy for Homeless Veterans**

#### **Objective:**

Provide state funding to support the annual Point-in-Time (PIT) survey specifically to improve the identification of homeless veterans in Maryland.

#### **Current Authority:**

- **Maryland Annotated Code, Human Services Article § 4-401 et seq.:** Establishes the **Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH)** to coordinate homeless services statewide.
- **Md. Code, Human Services Article § 4-405:** Requires local Continuums of Care (CoCs) to submit annual homelessness data, collected primarily through the PIT survey.
- While the law mandates reporting, it does **not allocate state funding** or provide veteran-specific PIT support.

#### **Justification:**

- Accurate data on homeless Veterans is critical for planning, allocating resources, and developing targeted programs.
- Other states provide Veteran-specific PIT funding and support:
  - **California:** Health & Safety Code §§ 50218–50219 authorize the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to provide grants and technical assistance to Continuums of Care for PIT counts, including targeted outreach to homeless Veterans.
  - **New York:** Social Services Law § 447 and Executive Law § 297(11) authorize supplemental funding to Continuums of Care and reporting support to improve identification of homeless Veterans.

- **Washington:** RCW 43.185C.050 and 43.185C.070 direct the Department of Commerce to provide grants and technical assistance to Continuums of Care for PIT counts, including Veteran-focused outreach.
- **Massachusetts:** Mass. Gen. Laws Ch. 6 §§ 8B–8C empower the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness (ICHH) to provide grants and technical assistance to ensure PIT counts accurately identify homeless Veterans.
- Maryland funding would allow counties and service providers to expand Veteran-focused outreach, hire or train survey staff, and implement better data collection tools.

**Outcome:**

Enhanced PIT survey data will allow Maryland to more effectively identify and provide housing and supportive services **for homeless Veterans**, ensuring resources reach those in greatest need.

**2) Legislative Suggestion: Funding County Veterans Service Officers Based on Veteran Population**

**Objective:**

Amend Maryland law to provide state funding to counties for County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) positions based on the number of Veterans residing in each county, ensuring equitable access to Veteran services statewide.

**Justification:**

- Counties currently vary in resources for CVSOs, leading to unequal access for Veterans.
- Several states provide population-based funding for county Veterans service offices:
  - **Michigan (MCL 35.621 – 35.623):** 1 CVSO per 5,000–7,500 Veterans.
  - **Ohio (Ohio Rev. Code § 5901.06):** 1 CVSO per 5,000–7,500 Veterans, funding adjusted for caseload.
  - **New York (N.Y. Mil. Law § 220):** State aid to counties based on Veteran population and office needs.
- A population-based funding formula in Maryland would:
  - Align CVSO staffing with Veteran population;
  - Promote equity across counties;
  - Support timely assistance for VA benefits, healthcare, and local programs.

**Example Approach:**

- Provide state funding for 1 full-time CVSO per 5,000–7,500 Veterans in a county, with proportional funding for additional officers.
- Counties may supplement with local funds but receive baseline state support to ensure minimum service levels.

**Outcome:**

Ensures all Maryland Veterans have consistent access to trained, accredited service officers, reducing disparities and improving statewide veteran support.

**3) Legislative Suggestion: Protecting Veterans from Unaccredited Claims Representatives**

**Objective:**

Amend Maryland law to prohibit unaccredited individuals from charging Veterans for assistance with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits claims, and to establish state-level penalties.

**Justification:**

- Federal law (38 U.S.C. § 5904; 38 C.F.R. § 14.636) already prohibits “claims sharks,” but enforcement is primarily federal and limited.
- States including **Texas, California, Illinois, North Carolina, and Florida** have enacted their own protections with penalties to deter predatory practices:
  - **Illinois 330 ILCS 60/9** – Bars compensation for VA claims assistance unless accredited.
  - **North Carolina Gen. Stat. § 143B-1256** – Limits claims assistance to accredited representatives.
  - **Florida Stat. § 295.05** – Restricts VA claims assistance and prohibits solicitation of fees.
- By adopting similar language, Maryland would strengthen protections, empower state enforcement, and ensure Veterans are not exploited.

We respectfully submit these priorities for your consideration and look forward to working together to advance them on behalf of Frederick County’s Veterans.

Frederick County Veterans Advisory Council

**Proposals from External Organizations:**

**Organization:** Frederick County Public Schools

**Submitted by:** Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Cheryl Dyson



July 30, 2025

Honorable Jessica Fitzwater  
County Executive  
Frederick County Government

Re: 2026 Legislative Considerations

Dear Mrs. Fitzwater,

I am writing to respond to your request dated June 30, 2025, to solicit ideas and suggestions for Frederick County's legislative package for the 2026 General Assembly session.

As you know, Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) continues to be the fastest-growing school system in Maryland. Despite this growth, our proportional share of local and state funding has not kept pace with our enrollment increases. This funding gap has required us to delay, scale back, or eliminate essential initiatives that directly impact students and staff. While many of our [2025 priorities remain](#), we respectfully submit the following as key legislative priorities for 2026:

### **1. Sustainable Blueprint Implementation Funding**

The Blueprint is now in deeper implementation phases. Many school systems, including FCPS, face long-term sustainability challenges, especially with the fiscal cliffs at the local level. **Advocate for:**

- A re-evaluation of mandated funding timelines and cost-sharing expectations.
- Revised language around the Career Ladder and requiring the NBC for principals.

### **2. Workforce Housing and Cost-of-Living Supports**

The teacher and education workforce crisis are compounded by the cost of living in places like Frederick County. **Propose legislation that:**

- Supports state incentives for workforce housing and loan forgiveness for public school employees.
- Expands housing voucher eligibility or grants for teachers and critical staff.

### **3. Data Modernization and Reporting Reform**

Districts are burdened with complex, duplicative, or outdated state reporting requirements, especially under the Blueprint. **Potential legislative focus:**

- Streamline and modernize state-required reporting processes.
- Ensure data collection aligns with instructional and operational goals, not just compliance.

### **4. Modernization of School Construction Funding Formulas**

Current state construction formulas often fail fast-growing counties like FCPS. **Legislative advocacy could include:**

- Recalibrating formulas to reflect growth projections and enrollment trends.
- Allowing more flexibility in procurement or construction design for LEAs.

These recommendations reflect a forward-thinking and student-centered approach to strengthening public education in both Maryland and Frederick County. They aim to balance urgent operational needs with strategic investments that will ensure lasting impact for students, families, and educators.

We appreciate your continued collaboration and leadership, and we thank you for inviting FCPS to contribute to the development of the county's 2026 legislative agenda.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cheryl L. Dyson".

Dr. Cheryl L. Dyson  
Superintendent of Schools

cc: Mrs. Rae Gallagher, Board of Education President  
Dr. Sarah Sirgo, Chief of Staff

**Organization:** Mental Health Association

**Submitted by:** Interim CEO, Suzi Borg

1. Suicide Fatality Review process—Currently, this occurs only at the State level. We would suggest legislation that would allow this process to occur at the county level through the Health Department with the ability to include community members. The Child Fatality Review Committee and the Fetal Infant Mortality Review Committee already occur at the county level with input from a wide variety of community stakeholders. A county process would allow us to identify systemic concerns that could impact our ability to save lives.
2. Eligible Medicare providers—We understand this is a federal issue and without changes at the federal level, there is little the state can do to assist. We would suggest that a licensed Out-patient Mental Health Clinic (OMHC) provider be allowed to bill Medicare for services provided by graduate level practitioners during the period they are working towards full licensure under the supervision of a fully licensed provider (LCPC or LCSW-C). We appreciate there was a successful effort to add LCPC to the approved provider list but the ability for graduate level clinicians to bill Medicare would increase the number of eligible providers able to serve the fastest growing population, the aging population. We have a well-documented workforce shortage, and the post-graduation process to achieve licensure takes a minimum of two years to complete.
3. Childcare scholarship funding—there are over 2,000 children on the wait list. A scholarship fund that is accessible and reliable would have an impact on the workforce, reduce parental stress, and provide safe, nurturing care for our children.
4. Continued support of the early childhood workforce—Maryland has invested in this workforce over the past several years and we would advocate for continued financial investment in growing this workforce through initiatives such as Growing Opportunities for Family Child Care (GOFCC).
5. Maryland's Blueprint for Education—We suggest the importance of including childcare providers in the delivery of public pre-K. Providing opportunities for childcare providers to participate in pre-K programs provides stability for our children to learn in a familiar environment.

**Organization:** Sierra Club Catoctin Group

**Submitted by:** Chair, Kerri Hesley

Dear County Executive Fitzwater,

Thank you for the invitation to offer ideas and suggestions for Frederick County's legislative package. Sierra Club Catoctin Group greatly appreciates this opportunity.

**1. Zero Waste:**

One of our priorities is the passage of the **Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program**, aka the "Bottle Bill". We are grateful for Senator Karen Lewis-Young's role as co-sponsor of the bill and we are greatly appreciative of the County Executive's support last year. The bill made significant progress last assembly with passage out of the Environment and Transportation Committee. By supporting this bill at the public meeting in the fall, and acknowledging its benefits to Frederick County, we go one step further toward assuring passage next year. Significant benefits to Frederick County include reduced litter, savings in collection, transport and tipping fees for the 3/4 of beverage containers that are currently trashed, and savings in costs of collection, transport and processing of beverage containers for recycling.

**2. Data Centers:**

SCCG has been generally understanding and supportive of data centers if limited to the previous Alcoa property but we have also been steadfast in our concerns of their environmental, energy, water and social impacts on the county and state and concerned about their expansion beyond this area. To that end, we respectfully submit three suggestions:

a-We supported SB116/HB270 calling for a study of data centers' impact, which passed the General Assembly last year with overwhelming bipartisan support. As we believe knowledge is power, we were thus dismayed and surprised when Governor Moore vetoed it. We are asking for county support of an override of the veto of this bill. The estimated cost of this study is minimal and would provide information to guide future actions related to data centers.

b-Related to data centers is the ever increasing need for electricity which results in increasing need for power sources and transmission lines. HB1037/SB909 passed last year with bipartisan support. It would establish an independent office to conduct long-term scenario planning for electricity, load forecasting, and inter-agency partnerships. This would ensure that Maryland has the information it needs when establishing state policy, and that the state is not as reliant on PJM for critical data. We are thus asking for your support of an override of this veto.

c-We strongly support a business personal property tax for data centers. If we are to have these entities with their acknowledged demand on our water supply and electrical grid and which threaten the county and state's climate reduction goals, then we at least must generate income from them that helps alleviate these costs as well as provide other benefits to the residents of Frederick County.

#### **4. Land Preservation:**

We ask you to advocate and support legislation to permanently protect lands that have been set aside. These lands include agricultural, forest and environmentally sensitive areas. These lands are protected in such programs as Priority Preservation Areas (PPAs), Rural Legacy Programs and Conservation Easement, Wildlife Habitats, Stream Valley Buffers and Watersheds but the protections are not permanent and therefore at risk. Frederick County is losing valuable agricultural land to industrial rezoning and development. Our forests are at risk of clear cutting to make room for transmission lines. The county is home to two critically important rivers, the Monocacy and the Potomac, but the encroachment of development, loss of forested land, runoff from farms, and storm water is polluting these waters. We need to permanently protect these lands.

Again, thank you for this opportunity. SCCG is appreciative of your request for our input.

**Organization:** United Way of Frederick County

**Submitted by:** President and CEO, Ken Oldham



September 5, 2025

The Honorable Jessica Fitzwater

Frederick County Executive

12 East Church Street

Frederick, MD 21701

Dear County Executive Fitzwater,

United Way of Frederick County enthusiastically supports the advancement of transportation projects throughout Frederick County and appreciates the opportunity to provide information on our advocacy priorities. As a steadfast advocate for the economic mobility of ALICE households, those that are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed, United Way is deeply committed to resolving the daily challenges faced by thousands of local families.

Transportation is a critical factor in determining the quality of life for ALICE families. When public transit options are comprehensive and affordable, they open doors to opportunity and help break down barriers that can perpetuate cycles of poverty. By investing in robust transportation initiatives, we strengthen the foundation of our community and promote greater equity for all residents.

ALICE households represent 32% Frederick County's population and form the backbone of our local workforce. These families include childcare providers, retail associates, nurses, teachers, and countless others who contribute to our community every day. Despite their essential roles, ALICE individuals frequently encounter transportation barriers that threaten their long-term stability and limit their ability to fully participate in our thriving local economy.

#### **Funding for Publicly Available Transportation**

To address critical transportation issues, we encourage lawmakers to maintain Transit as a FREE resource for ALICE families while also expanding investment in additional routes, higher frequency of service, and a growing transit presence in rural areas. Making public transit more accessible and convenient ensures that families can rely on these services to meet their daily needs. Additionally, we call for increasing support of transportation innovations such as the Ride United Network (RUN). As a microtransit project that has provided over 30,000 individual rides to ALICE families, RUN leverages a national partnership with Lyft and local nonprofit collaborations to fill transportation gaps. RUN provides flexible mobility solutions for clients who might otherwise be left without options to get to work, healthcare appointments, education

opportunities and so much more.

### **Need for Bus Shelters**

Expanding bus shelters throughout Frederick County, particularly in neighborhoods with high concentrations of ALICE families, is another essential investment. Shelters are not merely amenities; they serve as critical infrastructure for transit riders and offer protection from harsh temperatures and precipitation. Shelters improve safety and dignity for all users, including families with young children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. We are encouraged by the recent expansion of bus shelters like that in Hillcrest and the forthcoming shelter infrastructure on Waverly Dr. The prospect of integrating shelters into the Westside Park Community Center and Hillcrest Library, both in the planning phases, is an exciting opportunity. Adding these amenities during initial construction is far more cost-effective than retrofitting them later.

### **Crosswalk Improvements Connected to Route 15 Redevelopment**

Furthermore, substantial upgrades to pedestrian and bicycle crossings at every intersection within the Route 15 redevelopment project are urgently needed. Safe crossings are fundamental to empowering residents to walk and cycle with confidence. Improvements to sidewalks and crosswalks will especially benefit ALICE families who rely on active and multiple transportation modes. Enhancing accessibility for those who are hard of hearing and/or blind is also a significant consideration. These upgrades not only enhance safety, but also promote wellness, reduce emissions, and foster a greater sense of connection within our neighborhoods. When people are able to walk and bike safely, the entire community thrives.

In light of these needs, we respectfully urge the prioritization of essential transportation projects in Frederick County. Such investments directly address the challenges faced by ALICE households while generating broad benefits for all residents. By supporting Transit, funding innovative microtransit initiatives, expanding shelter infrastructure, and upgrading pedestrian and bicycle crossings, we can ensure that every resident – regardless of income – has the opportunity to participate fully in our thriving local economy.

Thank you for your ongoing leadership in building a more equitable and connected Frederick County.

Sincerely,



Ken Oldham, President & CEO, United Way of Frederick County