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Maryland Spent Big on Youth Mental Health—but Then the Budget Crisis Hit

PART ONE
By SASHA ALLEN
Capital News Service

Catholic Charities of Baltimore won state grants to fight chronic absenteeism in three Maryland public school districts by connecting troubled students with the mental health services they need.

Thrive Behavioral Health won state funding to work with students with severe behavioral issues in five school districts to keep the youths from being removed from school—and the agency said its tactics are working.

Overall, the new statewide youth mental health program that funded those two efforts supported behavioral health services for more than 58,000 students in its first eight months of operations from March through October 2024. Four out of every five of Maryland public schools received aid for mental health services under the state's effort.

But as the General Assembly moved to balance Maryland's fiscal 2025 budget last spring, lawmakers cut funding for the state's fledgling youth mental health program from Gov. Wes Moore's recommended \$110 million to \$40 million. And with

the state's fiscal problems deepening, Moore is recommending the state allocate \$40 million annually through 2030 to a program he once suggested should get \$130 million a year starting in fiscal 2026.

Meagan Pantelis, a clinical social worker at Thrive Behavioral Health, said the proposed cuts would decimate services for students that, in many cases, are just getting off the ground.

"Whenever I found out about that proposed cut, the very first thing that came to mind is that Gov. Moore is wanting to balance a budget on the backs of our children," Pantelis said. "I just find that to be just egregious. I mean, why are our children the population that we are targeting? Why are they not the population that we want to build up and support?"

Moore, however, has stressed the state must act to close a structural \$3 billion budget gap driven in part by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the 10-year, multibillion-dollar education reform plan that created the youth mental health program.

"We only have difficult decisions ahead," Moore said in his State of the State address in early February. "We must close this \$3 billion budget gap."

The mental health crisis

Among its many reform efforts, the Blueprint established a new agency—the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports—to manage the new statewide youth mental health effort. The General Assembly then provided the agency with \$119.7 million over

two years to set up its operations and then issue its first \$111 million in grants in February 2024.

There's a reason why the General Assembly initially invested so much in youth mental health. During the 2022–23

See **YOUTH** Page A3

State Youth Mental Health Grants in Prince George's County

By The Local News Network

The Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports—which issued \$111 million in grants to address youth mental health in 2024—issued 19 grants totaling \$24.9 million in Prince George's County:

iMind Health LLC received \$3.5 million for behavioral health crisis prevention and response through the Mobile Response and Stabilization model.

Hazel Health received \$2.75 million for telehealth services for students and families.

EveryMind received \$2.7 million for individual, group, and family therapy; mental health education and literacy; suicide prevention; and other services.

Sheppard Pratt Health System Inc. received \$2.1 million for individual and family therapy, early intervention groups, case management, psychiatric services and a summer program.

Healthincs received \$1.9 million for behavioral health screening, care coordination, social determinant of health supports, social emotional learning, individual therapy, group therapy, family supports, substance use disorder interventions, mental health screening, classroom observation and teacher training.

See **GRANTS** Page A4

Federal Workers Encouraged to Explore Job Opportunities With M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County

By PRESS OFFICER
M-NCPPC

RIVERDALE, Md. (March 3, 2025)—M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County is actively seeking talented individuals to fill a variety of open positions and invites those impacted by the federal workforce cuts to explore career opportunities with the Department.

With a strong commitment to public service, the Department recognizes the valuable skills and experience federal employees bring. Open positions span various fields, including administration, recreation programming, and information technology, many of which align closely with the experience and expertise of federal workers.

"We recognize the talent and dedication of federal employees, and we encourage them to explore fulfilling careers with the Department," said Tim Matthews, Human Resources Department Program Manager of M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation. "We are dedicated to enriching the lives

of Prince George's County residents and welcome professionals who share a passion for public service."

"The Department is an excellent opportunity for those looking to embark on a new career path and continue public service," said Bill Tyler, Director of M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation. "We understand that career transitions can be challenging, and we are committed to providing necessary resources and support to help individuals find fulfilling roles that match their skills."

To further support federal workers in transition, the Department is co-sponsoring the Employ Prince George's Federal Resource and Job Fair dedicated to assisting those affected by workforce reductions. This event will provide opportunities to connect with hiring managers and explore job openings with the Department.

**Employ Prince George's
Federal Resource and
Job Fair
March 12, 2025**

See **FEDERAL** Page A3

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Secretary Jake Day Honored With Advocacy Award

Secretary Day's leadership recognized by Bridges To Housing Stability with "Advocate For Change" award

By PRESS OFFICER
DHCD

NEW CARROLLTON, Md. (Feb. 28, 2025)—Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Secretary Jake Day was recently recognized for his leadership to create more affordable housing in Maryland by an advocacy group dedicated to ending homelessness.

Secretary Day was presented with the "Advocate for Change" award by Bridges To Housing Stability, a Columbia-based non-profit, during its "Heroes for Housing" event on Monday, February 17. Bridges To Housing Stability's mission is to provide a path to self-sufficiency to prevent and end homelessness in Howard County through affordable housing solutions and advocacy.

"It's an honor to have our work recognized by an organization dedicated to ending homelessness and who advocates for one of our most vulnerable populations on a daily basis," said Secretary Day. "But being named an Advocate For Change isn't just about my work—it is a united effort by all of us within and beyond the Moore-Miller Administration to address housing instability and insecurity in this state. We will continue this fight and it will be won with partnerships with our public officials and great non-profit organizations like Bridges To Housing Stability."

"Bridges is proud to present the Advocate for Change Award to Secretary Day, whose leadership in housing advocacy has transformed lives across Maryland. His work in championing transformative legis-



PHOTO COURTESY MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Secretary Day was presented with the "Advocate for Change" award by Bridges To Housing Stability, a Columbia-based non-profit, during its "Heroes for Housing" event on Monday, February 17.

lation—including the Housing Expansion and Affordability Act, the Housing and Community Development Financing Act, and the Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act—has helped thousands facing housing instability and homelessness," said Jen Broderick, Executive Director of Bridges To Housing Stability. "His deep understanding of the housing crisis and its impact on Bridges' clients, who struggle to secure affordable homes, is evident in every action he takes. For those we serve, housing is truly life-changing."

Secretary Day is the first recipient of the

"Advocate For Change" award, which was given in recognition of his exceptional work in advancing affordable housing initiatives across the state of Maryland, including the support of the Moore-Miller's historic housing package that addresses concentrated poverty in Maryland's marginalized communities, reduces instability in Maryland's housing supply and affordability, and enhances rights for Maryland renters.

For more information on the Department's work to address Maryland's housing crisis, visit dhcd.maryland.gov/TurningTheKey.

PGCPS Graduation Rate Climbs Across all Student Groups

Historic gains for Hispanic and English Learner grads drive growth

By PRESS OFFICER
Prince George's County Public Schools

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Feb. 28, 2025)—Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) saw a significant leap in its graduation rate, solidifying the district's commitment to academic excellence and student success. The Class of 2024's graduation rate jumped to 80.02%—rising by 5.6 percentage points from last year, a rate of improvement more than three times higher than the state's overall growth.

This improvement underscores the district's focus on breaking barriers, particularly for historically underserved student groups.

- Hispanic students saw a nearly 12 percentage point increase in graduation rates, from 59.7% in 2023 to 71.3% in 2024. This improvement is even more pronounced given the smaller Hispanic cohort, dropping from 4,092 in 2023 to 3,476 in 2024, proving that targeted support is driving success.
- English Learners saw a 14.6 percentage point jump, climbing from 52.3% in 2023 to 66.9% in 2024.
- Black or African American students also made modest gains, with their graduation rate increasing to 84.7%, building upon an already strong foundation.

"Our students are not just graduating at higher rates—they are defying the odds and proving that with the right support, anything is possible," said Superintendent Millard House II. "This surge in success is a direct result of the hard work of our educators, students, families, and community partners."

While Maryland's statewide graduation rate rose by 1.8 percentage points to 87.6% (its highest level since 2017), PGCPS saw a much larger increase, highlighting the district's substantial progress. Of the 759 additional graduates statewide, 251 (33%) were from Prince George's County. Among multilingual learners, the state saw 499 more graduates, with 153 of them—nearly a third—coming from PGCPS.

PGCPS continues to refine its strategic initiatives, ensuring every student has the resources and support to excel. The district's work is aligned with the broader goals of the state's Blueprint for Maryland's Future, aiming to provide equitable opportunities for academic success across the state.

For more details on graduation data, visit MDReportcard.org.

INSIDE

In & Around Morningside-Skyline

Brandywine-Aquasco

April Programs at Marietta House Museum

Collective Voices at National Harbor,
Saturday, March 8
Towns and Neighbors, Page A2

Lt. Governor Miller Hosts State and
Academia AI Summit

WSSC Water and Habitat for Humanity
Metro Maryland Launch New Partnership
to Assist Eligible Customers in Repairing
Residential Plumbing Leaks

Community, Page A3

To Be Equal:
Roberta Flack's Legacy: Find Your Own
"Green Piano" and Put That Beautiful
Music Into the World

But her defiant performances ... led Rev.
Jesse Jackson ... to call her "socially relevant
and politically unafraid."

Commentary, Page A4

Bowie BIC Announces New Federal
Contracting Collaborative Accelerator

DHCD Team Members to Join Leadership
Maryland's 2025 Classes

DOE Announces New Additions to
Executive Leadership Team
Business and Finance, Page A5

TOWNS *and* NEIGHBORS

In & Around Morningside-Skyline by Mary McHale 301-735-3451

Spring has sprung!

According to The Washington Post: Winter is winding down in Maryland with the start of meteorological spring less than a month away. But don't plan on putting away the cold weather gear anytime soon, said AccuWeather last Wednesday with the release of its 2025 spring forecast.

Spring is really coming and mild days in the 60s should launch the Tidal Basin's Yoshino cherry trees into their bloom process.

Meteorological spring starts on Saturday, March 1. Astronomical spring begins with the March equinox at 5:01 a.m. ET on Thursday, March 20.

Town of Morningside

A St. Patrick's Day celebration is coming up in Morningside, and, of course, the annual Easter Eggstravaganza.

Morningside March meetings include the Work Session on Tuesday, March 11, and the Town Meeting March 18, both beginning at 7. For all things Morningside, you can call 301-736-2300.

McNamara H.S. honored with Blue Ribbon

Bishop McNamara High School, in Forestville, has achieved National Blue Ribbon Status by the U.S. Department of Education. The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program is an award given to schools that excel academically or show significant improvement in closing achievement gaps.

McNamara was founded in 1964 as a Catholic school for boys. It went co-ed in 1991. Last year my great-granddaughter Mary McHale graduated from McNamara; her brother Wesley is a junior there now.

The Department of Education recognizes schools in public and private ele-

mentary, middle, and high schools.

Tulip Protection

From Ed's Plant World: "Deer love tulips! Don't let all your hard work and all that beauty go to waste. Begin spraying tulip leaves, stems and buds with a liquid deer deterrent before the flowers open and reapply after it rains. This will train deer to stay away. Avoid spraying deer repellent directly onto open flowers as some types may cause spots on the petals. Alternative protection includes covering your tulips with a chicken wire cage or assembling a simple PVC frame draped with deer netting.

If all else fails, plant daffodil bulbs instead of tulips this fall. Deer will not even look at these."

Neighbors & other good people

My son Mike McHale has been visiting from El Paso, Texas. Among other activities, he gave two talks at Bishop McNamara High School, about engineers and what engineers do. Mike is a McNamara graduate, did a year at the University of Maryland, graduated from General Motors Institute and has a master's from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He's now retired after 48 years with General Motors.

My friend Rich Landon dropped by for a visit—and even brought me three Paydays, my favorite candy.

Changing landscape

Tienda Karina Spanish Market has opened at 5681 Suitland Road, Hillcrest Heights. You might want to try the Fajita Mixta (\$16.99) some time. Looks great in the ads. 5681 Suitland Rd. Phone: 301-420-9003.

More and more trees are biting the dust as the lot at the corner of Suitland and Randolph Road is being cleared for

what, I understand, will be about nine new homes. (Years ago, as Skyline Zoning Chairman, I fought development of that block.)

A home at 6016 Maria Avenue, in Skyline, just sold for \$274,000.

Alice Bailer, taught at Thomas Stone

Alice C. Bailer, 79, formerly of Brandywine and a 1963 graduate of Duval High School, died February 22.

She graduated from Western Maryland College and taught at Admiral Lackey, Thomas Stone and North Point.

Survivors include her husband of 56 years, John J. Bailer, Sr.; sons John J. Bailer, Jr. and Thomas B. (Jill) Bailer; grandchildren, Sophia, John, Jordyn, Audrey and Collin; and siblings Martha (Brian) Fraser and Jeffrey Brooks.

Viewing was at Kevin Lesjack Funeral Home, Forest City, Pa. Memorial contributions can be made in Alice's name to the Charles County Children's Aid Society, 3000 Huntington Circle, Waldorf, MD 20602.

Milestones

Happy Birthday to Jon McKlveen, Shirley Dodgson and my grandson Richard Shearer, March 9; John F. Latimer, Karl Kaufman Jr., Alberta M. Smith and my grandson John Mudd, March 10; Karen Cordero, Blake James Shipman and Father Scott Hahn, March 11; Harold Wilson, Rebecca Turner, Marcy Richardson, Anita (Beall) Cook and me, March 12; Pamela Woodall, Kathy Elborne, Cordelia Bland, Shirley Carruth, Gregory Ritter, my daughter Therese Gallegos and Belinda Benavidaz, March 14; and Jacob Thompson, Jose Gryskiewicz and Jonathan Capps, March 15.

Send birthdays and anniversaries to muddmm@gmail.com.

April Programs at Marietta House Museum

By STACEY HAWKINS
Marietta House Museum

A Lunchtime Lecture The 1856 Project: Underground Railroad Activity on the Washington Baltimore Turnpike

Please join us on **Wednesday, April 2**, noon–1 p.m., for a lunchtime lecture, The 1856 Project: Underground Railroad Activity on the Washington Baltimore Turnpike.

Historian Dr. Douglas R. McElrath of the University of Maryland will discuss the fascinating history of the local Underground Railroad. Dr. McElrath is working in collaboration with the Universities Studying Slavery Consortium, a multi-institutional collaboration focused on sharing best practices for embarking on truth-telling projects that address human bondage and racism in institutional histories. As a contributor to Consortium's "The 1856 Project", Dr. McElrath will discuss the dangerous and courageous stories of Maryland freedom seekers on the Underground Railroad that took place on the Washington Baltimore Turnpike.

Free program. Ages 8 & up. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Walk-ins are welcome. Guests may bring a bag lunch. Please register at www.pgparksdirect.com and use the ticket code: MHM-SPEC-GA-20250402

Marietta House Museum Annual Giving Voice initiative:

"Ms. Story's History" with Shemika Renée

Please join us on **Saturday, April 12**, 1–3 p.m. Meet an eccentric bookstore owner who brings history to life. Ms. Renée performs as the character Ms. Story, bringing to the stage historical women including Harriet Tubman, Phillis Wheatley, and Serena Jackson. Take a journey and meet famous Black women who changed the course of history.

Shemika Renée is an award-winning actress who says, "it is important to remember the ancestors, to tell their stories, and show how they connect to us". She has performed in the DC-metro area and southern Maryland as well as an appearance on the Today Show. She is passionate about telling stories about barrier-breaking African Americans.

Recommended for ages 12 & up. \$10/person. Registration is required. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Register at www.pgparksdirect.com and use ticket code MHM-SPEC-GA-20250412

For more information, please call 301-464-5291 or email mariettahouse@pgparks.com

Marietta House Museum is located at 5626 Bell Station Road, Glenn Dale, MD. 20769 and is a property of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

D.C.'s Boat Show Returns to National Harbor for Third Year

More Vendors, More Food and More Boats!

By PRESS OFFICER
DC Boat Show

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. (Feb. 24, 2025)—The DC Boat Show announced that tickets are now on sale for this year's boat show on May 2–4, 2025, on and around the waterfront (150 National Plaza) at National Harbor. The popular show will run from noon to 7:30 p.m. on Friday, May 2; 10 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 3; and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday. General admission tickets are \$30 per person, \$17 for active duty military and first responders. And, the show's popular VIP ticket that provides a luxury VIP Boat Show Experience is also available for \$200. The VIP ticket includes nearby parking, special boat show access, hors d'oeuvres, top shelf tastings, signature cocktails, a private VIP lounge, private restrooms, a hand-rolled cigars experience and wine from Love Point Vineyards and Winery. Tickets for all categories are available here. Children 12 and under are admitted free.

Kick off the boating season on the beautiful Potomac River and check out more than 250 sail and power boats—new to quality pre-owned for immediate sale and order. There will be food and drinks for purchase, live music throughout the show and a wide array of vendor tents with the latest boating gear. Sample from 10+ local Maryland wineries and distilleries while browsing offerings from top marine vendors. Oysters will also be for sale on the docks and included in the VIP ticket.

Enjoy curated cocktails, craft beers and delicious eats from a variety of food trucks or visit one of the 40 restaurants in National Harbor. A Saturday Night Beach Party with DJ Gemini hosted by Mahogany Yachts takes place on Saturday, May 3 from 6–9 p.m. on the waterfront plaza with a live stream of the Kentucky Derby.

Admission includes the Catfish Canopy where attendees can learn all about catfish from experts including Ernie the Hog Snatcher, a legend in the fishing world. Enjoy hands-on fishing from the dock and learn how to catch catfish as well as how to fillet and cook them. Stephen Fultz, Triple City Anglers & Haz Life Fishing will also provide information and engaging demonstrations on fishing. Gypsy Habanero will provide Cooking on the Dock with Caribbean inspired flavors and spices.

National Harbor with its eight hotels, 40 restaurants and more than 160 retail outlets (including Tanger Outlets), is the perfect location for anyone planning an overnight or a long weekend.

For more information on the DC Boat Show, visit www.dcboatshows.com. Exhibitor and sponsorship opportunities are still available.

DC Boat Show is Washington, D.C.'s premier boat show and one of the few in the area that provides an opportunity for participants to get out on the water. Located annually at National Harbor—a major waterfront destination in Maryland that is minutes from Washington, D.C., the DC Boat Show provides easy access (located just off I-95 and I-295) as well as easy parking. The show provides public access to a wide range of sail and power boats and yachts, both new and quality pre-owned for immediate sale or order with representation by many of the top manufacturers. Visit www.dcboatshows.com.

Brandywine-Aquasco by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

WORDS BY KENDRA NEAL

Do not let anyone define you by your skin or your hair but rather your integrity and the character you wear. Not the amount of likes on social media to boast but spread kindness and compassion. It is what will matter most. You have many gifts and talents the Creator gave you to share that will inspire generations. So be generous and care not just known for our speed on the track and field but our strength and determination and our very strong will.

Deep like the roots of a mighty red oak handed down by the Ancestors and oral traditions they spoke. Fueled by faith and forged through pain. We shall never forget their sacrifice and our history will remain. Rich and overflowing no matter the race, color, or creed. We are all made in the image of God. May we wake up and take heed. This world is ever changing. Hold fast to your truth and believe you are surely made for more. Look up and just receive. This poem was written by Kendra Neal who is a member of Clinton United Methodist church in honor of Black History month.

BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY

The Office of Alumni Engagement and Stewardship is celebrating Bulldog Love the entire month of February. Eric Savage ('88) & Lori Savage ('90). Eric, originally from Baltimore, began his college journey at Morgan State University. His good friend, Kevin Broadus, was attending Frostburg State at the time when he told Eric, "We are transferring, man. We are going to BSU!" That decision changed Eric's life forever.

In the fall of 1985, while walking across Bowie State's campus, Eric met the love of his life, Lori. Their paths crossed a few times, but one day, as they passed each again, Eric spontaneously kissed her on the cheek. They did not know each other yet, but Lori remembers thinking, "I just let him kiss me on the cheek." From that moment on, their love story began. They started dating and have been inseparable ever since. On July 23, 1988, they got married, and to this day, Eric proudly says, "She is the best thing that ever happened to me." Visit the website to view our BSU Couples and read their love stories.

ALUMNI ALL STARS

Celebrating Bowie State University Alumni who give of their TIME, TALENT or TREASURE! Dr. LeTrecia Gloster ('01 & '20). Dr. LeTrecia Gloster's dedication to Bowie State University is a testament to the institution's profound impact on her academic and professional journey. As a proud alumna with a B.S. in Mathematics Education (2001) and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership (2020), she remains deeply connected to BSU through both personal achievement and professional contributions.

As Assistant Superintendent of The School District of the

City of York, Dr. Gloster played a pivotal role in leading the district out of Recovery status, a milestone in Pennsylvania's educational landscape. Passionate about expanding opportunities for black and brown girls and women, she has mentored countless students and colleagues throughout her career.

Through her unwavering support of BSU, Dr. Gloster helps sustain and expand opportunities for students pursuing excellence, particularly in STEM and education fields. As an adjunct professor in the College of Education, she directly shapes future educators, ensuring they receive the same transformative experiences she did. Her engagement, whether through mentorship, speaking engagements, or leadership, reinforces BSU's legacy of excellence and resilience.

Notably, as the keynote speaker at the BSU Women in Education: Blazing a Path and Making a Difference (2023) event, Dr. Gloster inspired future educators, demonstrating her commitment to fostering leadership and service. Her ongoing contributions ensure that Bowie State University continues to thrive as a beacon for historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), preparing generations of students to lead and excel.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Cultivate something new. Now's the time to plant the seed of something great in your life, help it grow, and see it thrive. Dig into new interests, skills and hobbies, with classes in gardening, sustainability, healthy living, and much more this summer at the College of Southern Maryland. Go to csmd.edu/community_education to explore CSM's full range of Community Education offerings.

A CULINARY STAPLE

Pig feet are considered a culinary staple in several countries. Including China, the Southern United States, France, Germany, Mexico, the Philippines, and parts of Eastern Europe where they are often prepared in different ways like pickled, boiled, roasted, or used in stews depending on the region. Information from Wikipedia.

EASTER BAKE SALE

A fundraiser to benefit the Peter A. Gross Scholarship. Homemade cookies (dozen) \$18, Sweet Potato Pie \$20, Brownies (pan) \$20, 7Up cake Iced \$10; Reg \$25, Carrot Cake (Sheet) \$25 Strawberry Short Cake \$25. Limited Supply. Pre-Orders only no later than April 13. Monetary donations are always welcome. Pick up Location: St. Philip's Church, Baden, Maryland. Pick up Dates/Times: Saturday, April 19, from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., Sunday, April 20, from 11 a.m. to Noon. Point of Contacts: Trena Hall 703-201-3863, Janice Harper 301-385-2620, Michele Chase 240-882-3369, Tasha Harley 443-404-5373.

Celebrate Women's History Month With the Poets and Friends of Collective Voices at National Harbor, Saturday, March 8

Join the socially-conscious poets of Collective Voices, (Sistah Joy, Brenardo, and Billye), and our Guest Poet, Sekeithia Johnson, and Djembe Drummer, Kevin Arnold, from 1–3 p.m., Saturday, March 8, at Arts' tination, 162 Waterfront Street, Oxon Hill, (National Harbor), MD, as we present "They Lifted Their

Voices and Their People," a free Women's History Month poetry event honoring Nikki Giovanni and other women poets and artists who have contributed significantly to the literary and cultural fabric of this nation.

—Sistah Joy, Collective Voices Founder

COMMUNITY

Youth from AI

school year, over a quarter of Maryland high school students reported their mental health was not good at most or all times, according to a Maryland Department of Health survey.

The percentage was only slightly lower for middle school students, with 22% reporting their mental health was not good at most or all times. Even more students in both middle and high school reported feeling sad or hopeless for at least two weeks in the past year.

“We all know generally that there’s a mental health crisis,” said Lorianne Moss, the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission program manager. “So as sort of the preamble to our first call for proposals, we laid out some data.”

That data, from the Centers for Disease Control, showed 40% of high school students experience persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness. Citing such statistics, the consortium urged mental health programs and nonprofits across the state to apply for funds.

Applicants requested a total of \$380 million in grants, said Mark Luckner, executive director of the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission, which oversees the consortium. That’s more than three times more than the consortium had to allocate.

Nevertheless, the state funded mental health service providers in every county. The program also allows service providers to offset treatment costs if families do not have access to insurance, or if students have high copays.

While Luckner and Moss praised the achievements from the first round of grants, they declined to comment on its uncertain future.

Preventing suicide

Preventing youth suicide is one of the consortium’s key goals, said Dr. John Campo, director of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Sixteen of the consortium’s 129 grants so far focus on suicide prevention.

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for people ages 10-14 and third for people ages 15-24, according to the most recent CDC data.

“Suicide kills more young people in that age group than cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, respiratory illnesses, infections of all kinds, meningitis, pneumonia, HIV, COVID—the whole nine yards,” Campo said. “Add them all together, suicide kills more people than all those things combined.”

Campo, who is also vice president of psychiatric services at Kennedy Krieger Institute, a Baltimore facility that specializes in treating people with neurological, developmental and psychological issues, was invited to join the consortium because of his expertise in the field.

Suicide rates among youth and young adults increased 62% nationwide from 2007 to 2021, according to the CDC. Meanwhile in Maryland, the teen suicide rate increased by more than a third from 2014 through 2022.

Campo said the state’s health care system has been ill-equipped to deal with that increase.

“Mental health crisis isn’t a priority in most emergency departments,” Campo said.

Campo is one of the co-chairs of the consortium’s best practices subcommittee, a group that developed a list of evidence-based mental health practices for grantees to implement.

Each program targets a different facet of the mental health crisis. The responses are also tailored to the varying levels of severity of the mental health conditions different age groups experience.

The consortium found through surveys targeted at both students and parents that 90% of students and families were satisfied with the services.

“A lot of these practices have been tested,” Campo said. “If regional organizations adopt them and implement them with fidelity, we really do want to believe that there will be positive outcomes associated with it.”

From the city to the shore

The youth mental health crisis touches all of Maryland, and so does the state’s response—but grants are tailored to the vast differences among Maryland’s urban, suburban and rural communities.

In Baltimore City, the 11 grants the consortium issued take into account a stigma surrounding mental health services, said Jennifer Cox, director of the University of Maryland School Mental Health Program, which received a \$970,000 grant to run a number of programs.

“We think in Baltimore City, we have to be a little bit more creative than just saying, ‘Come get help,’” Cox said. “We know we have good things to offer, we just need to find a good way to offer it.”

In working with trusted community organizations such as churches and youth centers, the program has been able to reach people who would otherwise not seek out mental health treatment, Cox said.

Services range from in-school counseling from certified clinicians to parent and caregiver education programs.

“We have to invest in it in a significant way now and going forward for the next 30 years because so many of our young people are suffering,” said Britt Patterson, an assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. “As a result, the adults in their lives are also struggling.”

The consortium funded a similar but much larger array of programs in Prince George’s County, which received \$24.9 million—the most of any county. The funding will set up a mobile response team to respond to young people experiencing mental health crises while increasing online and in-person counseling and other services.

One of the county’s largest grants, totaling \$2.7 million, went to EveryMind, a nonprofit that is vastly expanding its mentoring and therapy offerings as part of what it calls “Project Wellness.” Projects include training sessions for parents and school staff to teach them more about mental health, including how to manage crises.

“This initiative will create a supportive environment where students and families can truly flourish, meeting their mental health needs with compassion, cultural sensitivity and care,” said Patrice Harrell-Carter, director of Project Wellness.

Meanwhile, the state’s efforts on the largely rural Eastern Shore stress increasing access to treatment in a region that’s short of pro-

Lt. Governor Miller Hosts State and Academia AI Summit

The Summit was attended by more than 20 representatives from higher education institutions across multiple states, along with members of the administration and legislature, and industry leaders

By PRESS OFFICER
Maryland Lieutenant Governor News

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Feb. 21, 2025)—Lieutenant Governor Aruna K. Miller supported by the Maryland AI Subcabinet, the Maryland Department of Information Technology (DoIT), and the Maryland Higher Education Commission, hosted a State and Academia AI Roundtable.

At the roundtable, leaders in State agencies and academic institutions, along with industry advocates and experts, mapped areas of shared interest with the goal of unlocking clear short-, medium-, and long-term opportunities for collaboration.

One of many sessions aimed to brainstorm ideas to improve efficiencies across sectors through AI and research.

Leaders from both the state and academia sides spoke on the need to break down silos, and become more inter-connected to realize shared AI-related goals specifically around economic development.

“Our goal is simple: get the best, most brilliant minds in the same room and admire the innovation that culminates from speaking face-to-face,” said Lt. Governor Miller. “Maryland aspires to be a national leader in AI research, innovation, business attraction, and talent development so we are getting in place the foundational pieces to ensure we are well placed to thrive in the AI revolution over the coming decade.”

The summit was attended by representatives from Johns Hopkins University, UMBC, Morgan State, University of Maryland, Towson, UMES, Bowie State, Coppin State, Salisbury State, the Naval Academy, and University of Buffalo - SUNY.

On the state side, Secretaries Wu, Coker and Rai along with representatives from MDOT, Health, DoIT, and the Lieutenant Governor’s office participated, as well as Senator Katie Fry Hester, Delegate Terri L. Hill and Delegate Anne R. Kaiser.

The day-long event included productive discussions surrounding strategy, brainstorming sessions, and small group workshops, culminating in an exercise that helped state leadership and leading academics find practical opportunities to collaborate now and in the future.

Maryland’s Senior Advisor for Responsible AI, Nishant Shah, spearheads the adoption of responsible, productive AI across



PHOTO COURTESY MARYLAND GOVERNOR’S PRESS OFFICE

The summit was attended by representatives from Johns Hopkins University, UMBC, Morgan State, University of Maryland, Towson, UMES, Bowie State, Coppin State, Salisbury State, the Naval Academy, and University of Buffalo - SUNY.

the state, leads the state’s first AI Enablement Team at DoIT, and facilitated its recent AI Roadmap.

“We have an incredible opportunity to use AI to make the State more productive and to improve services for our constituents,” said Shah. “To realize that ambition, we’ll need deep partnership across sectors and a strengthened AI ecosystem in the State. Maryland is particularly blessed with leading academic institutions doing cutting-edge applied research in AI. Unlocking deeper collaboration between the State and Academia will help us increase our momentum and set us up for success.”

“Maryland’s higher education community is eager to collaborate with industry and legislative partners to advance AI implementation and strengthen our competitiveness nationwide,” said Dr. Sanjay Rai, Maryland Secretary of Higher Education. “With our robust ecosystem of universities, research institutions, and technology companies, Maryland is uniquely positioned not only to adapt but to lead in this AI-driven era, driving innovation through research and development.”

“Johns Hopkins is making a historic investment in Data Science and AI, growing our infrastructure and our research community in the foundations of AI and in diverse applications, challenges, and opportunities,” said Alexis Battle, Interim Co-Director for JHU Data Science & AI Institute. “We are eager to partner with government and industry to grow the ecosystem and together create a national hub for AI in Maryland.”

WSSC Water and Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland Launch New Partnership to Assist Eligible Customers in Repairing Residential Plumbing Leaks

CAP Leak Repair Program Focused on Helping Income-Constrained Customers Eligible Customers Can Receive Up To \$9,000 Per Year to Fix Plumbing Leaks

By PRESS OFFICER
WSSC Water

LAUREL, Md. (Feb. 26, 2025)—Continuing ongoing efforts to expand financial assistance programs to protect income-constrained customers, WSSC Water today announced a partnership with Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland to repair on-property residential plumbing leaks. The new CAP Leak Repair Program will help customers save money and conserve water by identifying and repairing leaking plumbing fixtures. Eligible customers can receive up to \$9,000 per year in plumbing repair services.

CAP is WSSC Water’s Customer Assistance Program, which provides financial assistance to approved residential customers.

How It Works

Customers enrolled in CAP who suspect they have an on-property leak should contact WSSC Water to receive a free annual plumbing leak investigation. If a leaking water pipe or fixture is identified,

Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland will coordinate with the customer to secure the services of qualified plumbers, oversee all repair work and ensure payment for repair services is made.

Eligible services include repair/replacement of:

- Leaking plumbing fixtures, including toilets, faucets, water valves, shower heads or external hose bibs
- Internal water plumbing pipes
- External on-property water service lines
- Leaking water heaters

To receive these services, the applicant must:

- Be a WSSC Water customer.
- Own and reside at the property.
- Be enrolled in WSSC Water’s Customer Assistance Program on the date of the application for assistance.

“The CAP Leak Repair Program demonstrates our commitment to expand our financial assistance programs to help more customers,” said WSSC Water General Manager and CEO Kishia L. Powell. “I thank our partners at Habitat for Hu-

manity Metro Maryland for their collaboration and commitment to this unique program that helps customers identify and repair leaks, which will help them save money and water.”

“Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland is thrilled to partner with WSSC Water on the CAP Leak Repair Program,” said Jeffrey Dee, President & CEO. “Habitat is dedicated to ensuring that homeowners with limited incomes are able to stay safely and affordably in their homes while preserving their generational wealth. WSSC Water’s CAP Leak Repair Program will further that mission, and Habitat is honored to help facilitate the program.”

Learn more about the CAP Leak Repair Program and apply for assistance today.

WSSC Water is the proud provider of safe, seamless and satisfying water services, making the essential possible every day for our neighbors in Montgomery and Prince George’s counties. We work to deliver our best because it’s what our customers expect and deserve.

Federal from AI

10 a.m.–2 p.m.
Prince George’s Sports and Learning Complex
8001 Sheriff Road, Landover 20785

The Department of Parks and Recreation provides competitive salaries, comprehensive benefits, and professional development opportunities to support career growth. Interested applicants are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. Visit pparks.com to search for jobs and Live More, Play More Where you work!

Volunteer with Us! Make an Impact in Your Community

In addition to employment opportunities, the Department also offers a variety of volunteer opportunities for those looking to give back, gain experience, or stay engaged in meaningful ways. Volunteering with the Department allows individuals to contribute to programs in sports, arts & culture, senior services, therapeutic recreation, student service learning, teen programming, environmental initiatives, history and archaeology, and more.

Volunteers benefit from hands-on experience, opportunities for professional de-

velopment, and the chance to make a difference in their community. Whether coaching youth sports, assisting with festivals, supporting summer programs, or participating in environmental projects, volunteers play a key role in enhancing recreation experiences for Prince George’s County residents.

To explore volunteer opportunities and find a role that fits your interests, visit pparks.com/volunteer today!

For additional resources and support for impacted federal workers visit the Maryland Public Servants Resource Website.

COMMENTARY

Marc Morial

President and CEO, National Urban League



To Be Equal:

Roberta Flack's Legacy: Find Your Own "Green Piano" and Put That Beautiful Music Into the World

"I'm deeply saddened that many of the songs I recorded 50 years ago about civil rights, equal rights, poverty, hunger, and suffering in our society are still relevant in 2020. I hope that people will hear these songs in a new way as they connect to their lives today, to this pandemic, to the growing economic disparities, to Black Lives Matter, to police brutality, to activism versus apathy, and the need for each of us to see it and address it."

—Roberta Flack

From the time she was a 4-year-old girl in Black

Mountain, N.C., Roberta Flack dreamed of having her own piano. But her parents couldn't afford one.

When she was 9 and her family was living in Arlington, Va., her father spied a beat-up old upright piano in a junkyard. He brought it home and painted it green.

That green piano—later immortalized in Flack's children's book, "The Green Piano: How Little Me Found Music"—launched the child prodigy into one of the most remarkable and influential careers in American music history.

Flack, who died [last] week at the age of 88, was perhaps best known for her chart-topping romantic ballads, "Killing Me Softly" and "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face." But her defiant performances addressing war, racism, sexism, LGBTQ rights, and other social issues led Rev. Jesse Jackson—whose Operation Breadbasket she supported—to call her "socially relevant and politically unafraid."

The first track on her debut album, *First Take*, released at the height of the Vietnam War in 1969, was the protest ballad, "Compared To What." On that same album—recorded before the Stonewall Riots—she turned the campy musical theater number "Ballad of the Sad Young Men" into a gay rights anthem.

"There is no way to fully emphasize the political risks Roberta Flack may have faced as an R&B singer in the late '60s, '70s and '80s, performing and discussing songs advocating human rights for gay men and women," music critic Eric Weisbard wrote.

She was one of the many guest performers on the feminist children's entertainment project *Free to Be ... You and Me*, performing "When We Grow Up" with Michael Jackson on the 1974 ABC television special.

Her commitment to creating opportunities for children—especially Black girls—was rooted in

her own challenges. When she had the opportunity to produce her own records—one of the first Black women ever to do so—she used the pseudonym "Rubina Flake"—a glamorous "concert artiste" alter ego she'd dreamed up during her childhood.

"Rubina helped Roberta endure the indignities faced by gifted Black children in the South, as when she'd sing "Carry Me Back To Old Virginny" for contest judges in hotels where she wasn't allowed to stay the night," NPR music critic Ann Powers wrote.

Even against those odds, she earned a full music scholarship to Howard University when she was just 15, graduating at 19. She later founded the Roberta Flack School of Music, to give students in The Bronx, New York, the opportunity to receive free music lessons.

She was a pioneer of the blend of jazz, blues, soul, and pop music that became known as "Quiet Storm," but she continued to defy categorization until ALS, sometimes called "Lou Gehrig's disease," cruelly robbed her of her voice in the last few years.

Her artistic, activist, and philanthropic legacy is endless, but best summed-up by her advice in *Green Piano*: "Find your own 'green piano' and practice relentlessly until you find your voice, and a way to put that beautiful music into the world."

—February 27, 2025

Marian Wright Edelman

Founder and President Emerita, Children's Defense Fund



ChildWatch:

Dr. Alvin Poussaint

Harvard Medical School scholar Dr. Alvin Poussaint, who passed away February 24, was a renowned psychiatrist and educator whose research included studying the ways racism and discrimination impact African Americans' self-esteem and mental health, including Black children and young people. He worked behind the scenes helping ensure positive portrayals of Black families in television and other media, but he also had a profound direct effect on generations of students, practitioners, and scholars who now cite him as an influence. At a moment when so much similar work is under threat, the end of Black History Month is an especially fitting time to remember

how scholars like Dr. Poussaint have shaped so much of our current understanding about the many ways racial bias affects children and young people and how much work remains to be done.

Dr. Poussaint's own work was influenced by pioneering earlier Black scholars like Dr. Kenneth Clark and Dr. Mamie Phipps Clark, the architects of the famous "doll study." The Clarks originally designed this study in 1939 as a method of learning more about the ways very young Black children were already being influenced by stereotypes about race. During their sessions they showed Black children two matching baby dolls, one Black and one White, asking them which doll was

pretty, which was nice, which was bad, which doll they preferred to play with, and which one looked like them. In order to carry out the study the researchers had to paint the "Black" dolls themselves with brown paint, since Black dolls were not readily available. They found the majority of the children they interviewed said the White dolls were the nice, pretty ones and the Black dolls were bad. The majority also said they would rather play with the White doll, and some children became visibly upset and even left the room crying when they were asked to choose which doll looked most like them. The Clarks' research would ultimately be used in *Brown v. Board of Education* as part of the evidence demonstrating the ways racial segregation caused psychological damage to Black children.

Dr. Poussaint was part of the generation of Black psychiatrists who started their training soon after that landmark decision. He grew up in East Harlem, New York, and after attending Columbia University on a scholarship he enrolled in Cornell Medical School in 1956 as the only African American student in his class. During the Civil Rights Movement he chose to go South. He served as the Southern Field Director of the Medical Committee for Human Rights in Jackson, Mississippi,

where we overlapped when I was directing the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund office in Jackson, and provided medical care for events like the final Selma to Montgomery March, walking the entire length of the 50-mile route with a case full of medical supplies and prepared to use his earlier emergency medicine training to give needed treatment on the spot. The Selma march in particular left him impressed with the spirit of many of the local marchers, including teenagers, who were so willing to risk their own safety in order to fight for their rights. His experience working in Mississippi also gave him a sustained first-hand experience of segregation and the constant threat of racial violence that continued to shape his research and advocacy.

Throughout his career, his advocacy for Black children and families included highlighting the need for policies and programs that support children and young people's positive self-image and psychological health. He worked to break stigmas around mental health in Black communities, and called for more Black psychiatrists and psychologists to enter the field and for mental health serv-

See **CHILDWATCH** Page A6

Youth from A3

professionals to respond to the youth mental health crisis. According to the October 2024 report, "Investing in Maryland's Behavioral Health Talent," Maryland is nearly 50% short of the mental health workers it needs.

"There's a resounding message of, we just need more," said Beth Anne Dorman, CEO of For All Seasons, a behavioral health and rape crisis center that received a grant to expand its services in Kent County, the state's least populous. "We need more."

Caroline County, where two organizations won grants to ex-

pand their mental health services, faces the same situation, said Derek Simmons, the county's superintendent of schools.

"We are a rural county that is less wealthy than a lot of parts of the state," said Simmons, co-chair of the consortium's best practices committee. "So access to behavioral health is near and dear, and a real challenge where I'm at."

An uncertain future

Yet the state budget crunch looms as a threat to its youth mental health efforts.

If the General Assembly agrees with the funding levels suggested

in the governor's budget, programs that just started last year may have to be eliminated, said Del. Eric Ebersole, a Democrat who represents parts of Baltimore and Howard counties.

"That group worked in good faith to bring providers online," said Ebersole, a consortium member. "If the government loses them, can you get them back?"

Dan Martin, senior director of public policy at the Mental Health Association of Maryland, said the proposed cut in planned funding comes at a time when youth mental health care is more important than ever.

"At a time when 18% of high school students and 24% of mid-

dle school students have seriously considered suicide in the past year, a reduction of this size in school mental health funding could prove disastrous," Martin said.

If the General Assembly approves Moore's budget proposal, the grants distributed by the program in fiscal years 2025 and 2026 combined will be cut 28% from the total amount distributed the prior two years.

Asked for comment, Moore's office stressed the governor's proposed allocation for fiscal year 2026 and beyond is exactly what the General Assembly approved for 2025.

"Gov. Moore is maintaining

the current level of funding for the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports," wrote a spokesperson from the governor's office. "The Governor strongly supports behavioral health treatment for Maryland's children, and maintaining current levels of funding during the state's budget crisis reflects that commitment."

But the Moore spokesperson's statement ignored that only a year ago, a Moore budget proposal called for significantly expanding funding for the consortium to \$130 million annually from fiscal years 2026 through 2029. Instead, the current proposal allocates \$40 million per year through fiscal year 2030.

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is urging action

to try to persuade the General Assembly to restore funding to a higher level. The organization is circulating a fact sheet with information on the consortium, the work it's done and what a permanent cut in funding would do to students and schools.

"Use the above information and write an email to your legislators asking them to restore funding to the Community Supports Partnership Fund," the fact sheet said. "Provide testimony (either written or oral or both) opposing the cut" at General Assembly hearings.

And under the "why is funding needed" section, the Mental Health Association fact sheet reads: "Dramatic worsening of the behavioral health of children and youth over the last decade."

Grants from A1

Hyacinth Wellness received \$1.35 million for substance use disorder prevention, intervention, and treatment through peer education, therapeutic art interventions, peer support groups and individual and family therapy.

VineCorps received \$1.3 million for substance use disorder services, behavioral health education and support for students and families, support groups, wraparound and navigation services, and schoolwide preventative mental health literacy programming.

Spectrum of Hope, Health, Wellness and Community Services LLC received \$1.25 million for family support, navigation and linkages to services that identify and support children and youth with behavioral health and co-occurring neurodiversity including autism.

AprilMay Company Inc. received \$1.23 million for early intervention for learners with intellectual and developmental disabilities, professional learning opportunities for teachers to support students with such disabilities, parent and family supports, autism spectrum disorder testing, di-

agnosis and counseling.

GapBuster Inc. received \$845,000 for individual, group and family therapy; social-emotional learning; art therapy; motivational interviewing; mentoring; substance use services; and suicide prevention.

Paths for Families (Formerly Adoptions Together and Family Works Together) received \$770,000 for counseling for students, support for families and training in trauma for school staff, with a focus on students in foster care, kinship care or adoptive families.

Reginald S. Lourie Center for Infants and Young Children received \$730,000 for Circle of Security groups for parents and teachers to help provide a secure base for children to reduce the impact of adversity.

La Clínica del Pueblo Inc. received \$735,000 for individualized mental health counseling, care coordination, mental health workshops for parents and training for teachers, focusing on the Latino population.

Community Advocates for Family & Youth Inc. (CAFY) received \$680,000 for individual, family, and group therapy; support groups; peer

support; suicide prevention; and bereavement support.

SMYAL (Sexual Minority Youth Aid Society) received \$365,000 for school-based groups and individual counseling in-person or via telehealth, focusing on LGBTQ+ youth and those navigating gender expression issues.

Transitions Counseling and Mentoring Services Inc. received \$385,000 for outpatient therapy; psychiatric rehabilitation programs; diagnostic, assessment, consultation, and psychiatric services; substance abuse services; suicide prevention; family support; and mental health and wellness workshops.

Uneo Health (in partnership with NAMI Maryland, Bowie State University, and AMG) received \$470,000 for a smartphone app that will provide self-care and support resources to at-risk and underserved high school teenagers through a secure, gamified platform.

Kirstin's Care LLC received \$295,000 for support groups, one-on-one interventions, and family support for youth experiencing mental health concerns or distress and substance use disorder.

The Prince George's Post

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BUSINESS AND FINANCE

Maryland Small Business Development Center

Artificial Intelligence: The Input, Influence and Impact

Tuesday, March 18, 2025 • 10-11 a.m.

Online Meeting (Live)

Registration: <https://mdsbdc.ecenterdirect.com/events/18178>

Join us for training designed specifically for business owners. This session will explore how AI is reshaping industries, from its role in improving operational efficiency to driving innovation. Learn about the different inputs that power AI systems, how AI influences business decisions, and the profound impact it can have on growth, customer experience, and competitive advantage. This training will provide actionable insights on harnessing AI's potential while addressing challenges like data privacy and ethical considerations. Presenter, Dave Barnart, ManningMedia

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

Should I Wait Until Age 70 to Claim Social Security?

By RUSSELL GLOOR,
National Social Security Advisor at the AMAC Foundation,
the non-profit arm of the Association of Mature American Citizens

Dear Rusty: I am a married woman, at my full retirement age, and the primary earner in my marriage. How do I know if I should take my Social Security now or wait till 70? I will lose quite a bit if I take it now. How will it affect my taxes if I take it now while still working a full-time job? **Signed: Undecided**

Dear Undecided: As you apparently already know, waiting until you are 70 to claim Social Security will result in you getting your maximum possible monthly SS retirement benefit. After your full retirement age, you get about 8% more each year you delay claiming up to age 70. But deciding exactly when to claim should consider both your financial needs and, importantly, your life expectancy. If you don't urgently need the money now and your life expectancy is at least "average," then waiting until age 70 to claim is usually the right choice. But if you urgently need the money, or your life expectancy is less than average (mid-80s for a woman your current age), then claiming before age 70 is usually prudent.

Regarding taxation, Social Security benefits may be taxable if your combined income from all sources exceeds the threshold for your IRS filing status. If you file taxes as "married/jointly" and your combined income (including your work income) exceeds \$32,000, then half of the SS benefits you received during the tax year becomes part of your taxable income. But if your combined income is over \$44,000, then up to 85% of your SS benefits becomes taxable income (the thresholds are lower for those who file as a single). So, your full-time work income will likely affect how much of your Social Security benefits are subject to income tax by the IRS.

In the end, only you can decide when you should claim Social Security. Taxation of benefits may be a factor to consider since you are still working full time (thus more of your SS benefits will be taxable). But waiting longer to claim results in a higher benefit for the rest of your life (your SS retirement benefit will be .667% more for each month you delay, up to age 70). If the "rest of your life" is a long time and you don't urgently need the money, waiting is often the right choice. If not, claiming earlier may be wiser.

If you want to get a more personalized estimate of your life expectancy, I suggest you use the tool we use here at the AMAC Foundation: www.socialsecurityreport.org/tools/life-expectancy-calculator/.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website (amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org.

The 2.4 million member Association of Mature American Citizens [AMAC] www.amac.us is a vibrant, vital senior advocacy organization that takes its marching orders from its members. AMAC Action is a non-profit, non-partisan organization representing the membership in our nation's capital and in local Congressional Districts throughout the country. And the AMAC Foundation (www.AmacFoundation.org) is the Association's non-profit organization, dedicated to supporting and educating America's Seniors. Together, we act and speak on the Association members' behalf, protecting their interests and offering a practical insight on how to best solve the problems they face today. Live long and make a difference by joining us today at www.amac.us/join-amac.

Bowie Business Innovation Center Announces New Federal Contracting Collaborative Accelerator

Empowering 8(a) Firms and Historically Black Colleges and Universities to Excel in Federal Contracting

By PRESS OFFICER
Bowie BIC

BOWIE, Md. (Feb. 21, 2025)—The Bowie Business Innovation Center (Bowie BIC), recently ranked 6th among Maryland's largest incubators and accelerators by the Baltimore Business Journal, announced the launch on February 24, 2025 of its new Federal Contracting Collaborative Accelerator (FCCA). This cornerstone initiative is under its Center of Excellence for 8(a) Government Contracting program. This program is designed to equip U.S. Small Business Administration 8(a)-certified businesses and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) with tools, insights, partnerships, and resources needed to excel in the competitive federal contracting arena.

"This initiative has the potential to significantly expand federal contracting opportunities for 8(a) certified firms, enhance their collaborations with HBCUs, and stimulate new economic growth in the communities surrounding the colleges and universities," said Jesse Buggs, Chairman of the Bowie BIC Board of Directors. "We're confident this program will deliver measurable community development assets and long-term economic benefits, including potentially significant numbers of 21st century jobs, for the firms, HBCUs, and their respec-

tive communities."

The FCCA reflects Bowie BIC's mission to empower historically disadvantaged businesses. Known for its award-winning accelerator programs, Bowie BIC specializes in providing businesses with resources to scale sustainably, pursue and secure government contracts, and excel during periods of rapid growth and expansion.

FCCA participants will engage in a robust curriculum focused on key areas as it relates to government contracting such as marketing intelligence and research, business development and client relationship management, capture and proposal management, project and sub-contract management, teaming arrangements and legal strategies, and contract management and transition strategies. Through tailored and specialized training, participants will gain expertise in research and development, entrepreneurship, and workforce development, positioning them to succeed in the federal procurement space. The program has already garnered commitments from eighteen 8(a) firms.

"The launch of the Federal Contracting Collaborative Accelerator is a groundbreaking initiative that reflects the mission of the Center of Excellence for 8(a) Government Contracting," said June Evans, Executive Director of the Bowie BIC. "We are honored to partner with

Bowie State University on this transformative endeavor, which will create lasting opportunities and catalyze impactful change in the federal procurement landscape."

Developed in partnership with Bowie State University, the oldest HBCU in Maryland, the FCCA represents a shared vision of fostering collaboration and driving economic empowerment in underrepresented communities.

Participation in the program is free of charge, and for more information contact Angie Duncanson, 8(a) Center of Excellence Program Manager, at 301-383-1550.

For more information about Bowie BIC, its programs, and FCCA, visit www.bowiebic.com

The Bowie Business Innovation Center (Bowie BIC) is a business accelerator and expert network serving socially and economically disadvantaged businesses. Our accelerators educate businesses on becoming bankable; equip businesses to pursue government contracts; and elevate business performance in all areas during rapid growth and expansion. Recognized for its impact, Bowie BIC was ranked 6th in the state of Maryland in the Baltimore Business Journal's annual Incubator and Accelerator Ranking, highlighting its commitment to fostering innovation and driving business success.

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Team Members to Join Leadership Maryland's 2025 Classes

By PRESS OFFICER
Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development

NEW CARROLLTON, Md. (Feb. 24, 2025)—Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Secretary Jake Day announced that two team members will join Leadership Maryland's 2025 professional development classes. Chief Operating Officer Garret King will join Leadership Maryland's 2025 Executive Program Class. Dolores Deel, Asset Management Officer and Portfolio Administrator in the Division of Credit Assurance, will be a member of the 2025 Emerging Leader Program Class.

"Growing Maryland's economy, strengthening our state's sustainability, and ensuring equity for all takes leadership, so it is essential to grow and strengthen the next wave of leaders to carry the torch forward," said Secretary Day. "Both Garret King and Dolores Deel are passionate, experienced public servants who exemplify the professionalism and dedication of the department's team, and I congratulate them on this tremendous opportunity."

Chief Operating Officer Garret King will bring his expertise in government, project management, and agency operations to Leadership Maryland's 32nd Executive Program Class of 53 business and community leaders. The program will feature five, two-day sessions focused

on Maryland's five main regions and issues impacting economic development, education, health and human services, criminal justice, the environment, and diversity. More than 100 business, government, education, nonprofit, and community experts will serve as panelists and guest speakers.

"I'm honored and excited to have been chosen for Leadership Maryland's Executive Program Class of 2025," said King. "I am more than eager to collaborate with my fellow classmates as we embark on an eight-month journey exploring the most critical issues affecting our state and contribute our expertise to drive meaningful change."

Building on her years of experience helping manage the department's multi-billion investment portfolio, Dolores Deel will join the Emerging Leader Program 2nd Class as part of 36 rising stars and high-potential employees who are poised for upward growth within their organizations. The program will feature six day-long sessions that will include both interactive training and panel discussions featuring leaders from across the state as guest speakers. The curriculum offers a holistic approach to leadership development, designed to help participants increase their self-awareness, skills, and tools to become inclusive and impactful leaders.

"The duty of providing affordable housing has been entrusted to our agency by the residents of Maryland. Housing

provides security to the most vulnerable, and as someone who has experienced discrimination first hand, I'm grateful for this responsibility and to work for the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development," said Deel. "I'm thankful for the opportunity to grow my leadership through the Emerging Leader Program and learn new ways to serve and support my fellow Marylanders."

The department's recent Leadership Maryland graduates include Deputy Secretary Juila Glanz (Executive Program 31st Class) and Director of Communications Allison Foster (Emerging Leader Program 1st Class). Glanz, who joined the department in March 2023 and was appointed as Deputy Secretary in December 2023, previously served as City Administrator and Acting Mayor of Salisbury. Foster has served as the department's Director of Communications since May 2023 and previously worked at the City of Salisbury as a Media Specialist.

Established in 1992, Leadership Maryland is a statewide nonprofit offering professional development programs by harnessing the strength of the state's business and community leaders. Supported by an alumni network of leaders from all industries and regions of the state, Leadership Maryland has provided professional development to thousands of Marylanders to influence positive change and build a better Maryland.

Maryland Department of the Environment Announces New Additions to Executive Leadership Team

Ortiz, Schafer and Kessler Bring Federal Experience

By PRESS OFFICER
Maryland Department of the Environment

BALTIMORE (Feb. 28, 2025)—Maryland Department of the Environment Secretary Serena McIlwain announced the appointment of three members to executive positions in the agency who bring a wealth of experience in federal policy, improving the Chesapeake Bay and environmental justice.

The appointments are Adam Ortiz, Deputy Secretary for External Relations; Zachary Schafer, Assistant Secretary for Policy; and Rick Kessler, Director of the Land and Materials Administration.

All three come to the department from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

"We are excited to add so much talent and expertise to our executive leadership team, especially at this uncertain time for environmental protection," said Secretary McIlwain. "Deputy Secretary Ortiz, Assistant Secretary Schafer and Director Kessler are tremendous assets who will advance our priorities of clean air, water and land for all Marylanders."

Ortiz joins the department after an impactful tenure as Regional Administrator at the EPA's Mid-Atlantic Office. Known for his innovative leadership, he spearheaded environmental justice

initiatives, forged groundbreaking partnerships and the effort leading to the highest Chesapeake Bay health grade in decades. He also served as a former director of the Montgomery County and Prince George's County departments of environmental protection and Mayor of Edmonston.

Schafer brings more than 15 years of policy expertise, most recently serving as Director for Policy at the EPA's Office of Water. At EPA he played a pivotal role in shaping and implementing infrastructure investments under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and driving innovation and progress on climate resilience, environmental and health protection, and economic growth.

Schafer also founded and led the nonprofit United for Infrastructure.

Kessler has more than 35 years of experience in energy and environmental policy. His roles have included Senior Advisor at the EPA and Staff Director for Energy and Environment at the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee. He was instrumental in drafting landmark legislation, including the Inflation Reduction Act. His deep understanding of legislative processes and strategic leadership will elevate the department's work in land and materials management.

The new additions join Deputy Secretary for Internal Operations Suzanne Dorsey, Assistant Secretary of Environmental Justice Aneca Atkinson, Air and Radiation Administration Director Chris Hoagland, Water and Science Administration Director Lee Currey and Business Administration Director Cia Cook on the department's executive leadership team.

