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NAUW Launches New Branch in Prince George's County

By PRESS OFFICER
National Association of University Women

OXON HILL, Md. (Dec. 7, 2025) —The National Association of University Women (NAUW) proudly announces the chartering of its newest branch in Prince George's County, Maryland. The ceremony, held on December 7, 2025 at Harborside Hotel in Oxon Hill, Maryland celebrates NAUW's mission to empower women through education, leadership, and community service.

The new branch will focus on NAUW's Six-Point Program: Education, Literacy, Health and Wellness, Political Awareness/Civic Engagement, HBCU Support, and Sisterhood. Programs will include mentorship, workshops, and community

initiatives designed to uplift women and families in the region.

"NAUW has always championed visionary women serving in unity and love," said Branch President's Pamela Wright, President of the Prince George's County Branch of the National Association of University Women, Inc. "We are excited to engage our community and create meaningful opportunities for growth, learning, and impact."

For more information about the new branch, programs, and membership opportunities, visit <http://nauwpgc.org/or> follow us on social media at <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61582055634493&sk=about>



PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN

The ceremony, held on December 7, 2025 at Harborside Hotel in Oxon Hill, Maryland celebrates NAUW's mission to empower women through education, leadership, and community service.

M-NCPPC Prince George's County Planning Department Recognizes the Neighborhood Planning Academy Fall 2025 Cohort With Graduation Ceremony

By PRESS OFFICER
M-NCPPC

LARGO, Md. (Dec. 4, 2025)—The Prince George's County Planning Department of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission hosted a graduation ceremony to celebrate the Fall 2025 Cohort of the Neighborhood Planning Academy on Wednesday, December 3, 2025, at the M-NCPPC Largo Headquarters. Designed specifically to engage Prince George's County residents and community stakeholders, the Neighborhood Planning Academy explains the County's planning framework, how to engage in the development review process, and how to advocate for their community goals and visions.

This fall, 61 representatives, reflecting all regions of Prince George's County, were selected to participate in a seven-week program to learn the ins and outs of the County's planning framework, how to engage in the development review process, and how to advocate for their community goals and visions. During this cohort, a dedicated student and Prince George's County resident viewed sessions and participated while located in Guam. A father and son were randomly selected

and participated in the program, as well—a first for the Neighborhood Planning Academy. Since the launch of the program in the fall of 2023, more than 250 individuals have participated in the Neighborhood Planning Academy.

"I am excited to see the Neighborhood Planning Academy continue to educate and engage our community," said Darryl Barnes, Chairman of the M-NCPPC Prince George's County Planning Board. "This award-winning program will help remove barriers to meaningful engagement and empower residents to become important stakeholders in the future of their community."

"The Neighborhood Planning Academy provides Prince Georgians an opportunity to engage in the planning and development review process," said Lakisha Hull, Director of the M-NCPPC Prince George's County Planning Department. "The award-winning program also delves into specialized planning topics that affect the sustainability and livelihood of our communities."

The Fall 2025 Cohort of the Neighborhood Planning Academy included Bridgett Allen-Williams, Nathan Arbach, Michele Atcherson, Kim Bagley, Tolson Banner, Ta Misha Bascombe, DaCia Bell,

Daphne Benbow, Ashwin Bhouraskar, Jomo Blackman, Lori Bledsoe, Alexandra Bolden, Linora Carr, Latisha Crawford, Curtis Crutchfield, Marlon Cruz, Brandi Cypress, Alicia Denning, Lee Eismann, Aaliyah El-amin, Gerri Elliott, Camille Exum, Iman Freeman, Charlotte Fritts, Stalina Goodwin, Donald Hamilton, Marie Hinds Kamara, Benjamin Hobbs, Amanda Jackson, Jesse Johnson, Cheyenne Johnson, Denise Jones, Ashley Kearney, Aisha Khan, JaRonn Latney, Jamel Lattimore, Nicaury Lora Vasquez, Sharon McInnis, Hal Metzler, Gina Miller, Quentin Miner, Yvette Moore, Pernell Murray Jr., Carlos Nunes, Kiara Palmer, Janna Parker, Terri Powell-Brown, Briana Rorie, Amy Sawyer, Melissa Schweisguth, Shivali Shah, Gugu Sikhakhane, Jesse Springfield, Clyde Springfield, Phyllis Thomas, Chris Van De Moortel, Orlando Velez, Nathaniel Wallace, Heather Urwiler, Darius Stanton, and Amelia Chisholm.

During the graduation ceremony, participants delivered capstone project presentations that incorporated independent research findings as well as lessons and

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PHOTO CREDIT: PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL

District 3 Council Member Eric Olson is Vice Chair and District 7 Council Member Krystal Oriadha is Chair for the 2026 Legislative Year.

County Council Elects New Leadership Team for 2026

By LINDSAY WATTS
Prince George's County Council Media

On Tuesday, December 2, the Prince George's County Council elected District 7 Council Member Krystal Oriadha as Chair and District 3 Council Member Eric Olson as Vice Chair for the 2026 Legislative Year. Chair Oriadha announced this year's Council theme is 'Prototype for What is Possible.'

"This is more than a slogan, it's a declaration. A prototype is intentional. It's bold. It is the first step in designing something greater than what currently exists," said Chair Oriadha. "The people of Prince George's County are not looking to us for what is easy. They are looking to us for what is possible. And we will rise to meet that expectation. We will show Maryland, we will show this region, what it looks like when a legislative body leads with intention, collaboration, relentless focus on the future. This Council will be the prototype of what is possible."

Chair Oriadha, one of the youngest women and the only first-generation African immigrant to serve as Council Chair, was sworn into her seat on the Council in Dec. 2022. Her focus on the Council has been passing legislation that supports marginalized communities, Black maternal health, as well as housing and medical accessibility. Her previous career accomplishments combine more than a decade of professional experience within the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. She is co-founder of PG ChangeMakers, a grassroots organization addressing housing, food insecurity, healthcare,

LGBTQ+ rights, police reform, education, and systemic racism. She was the youngest Junior Project Manager for Hewlett Packard's Global Enterprise Management Team, employed as a federal government Senior Communications Consultant, building national campaigns around issues including human trafficking, domestic violence, and adolescent pregnancy prevention. She was the recipient of the 2019 Innovation Fund 40 under 40 Award for Public Service and the 2018 Howard University Alumni MoveMakers Award. She also served on the 2019 Clinton Foundation's 20/30 Leadership Council.

Vice Chair Eric Olson was elected in 2022 to represent District 3 on the Prince George's County Council, returning to a seat he previously held from 2006 to 2014. For more than two decades, he has been a leader in smart growth, climate action, and community development, helping advance over \$450 million in redevelopment, expand bike trails and playgrounds, strengthen stormwater protections, promote renewable energy, and support major transit projects including the Purple Line. He has also championed neighborhood quality-of-life initiatives. Vice Chair Olson previously served on the College Park City Council, led the College Park City-University Partnership, directed the Sierra Club's national Healthy Communities Campaign, served as Deputy Director of FairVote, and worked on Capitol Hill for then-Congressman Bernie Sanders.



PHOTO COURTESY MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

The Prince George's County Planning Department of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission hosted a graduation ceremony to celebrate the Fall 2025 Cohort of the Neighborhood Planning Academy on Wednesday, December 3, 2025, at the M-NCPPC Largo Headquarters.

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TOWNS *and* NEIGHBORS

Brandywine-Aquasco

by Audrey Johnson, will return next week!

In and Around Morningside-Skyline

With Mary McHale, will return soon!

5 Black-owned Bookstores in Maryland You’ll Want to Bookmark

By ZSANA HOSKINS
Capital News Service

Across Maryland, Black-owned independent bookstores serve as community spaces where reading, conversation and culture intersect. These shops highlight Black stories, authors and creators while hosting community-oriented events.

“It has been a great impact when people can see stories that represent them. Even as adults, we need to see representation,” said Tia Hamilton, who founded Urban Bookstore in Baltimore.

Here’s a roundup of Black-owned bookstores in Maryland. In addition to selling bestsellers and classics, they offer opportunities to explore Black history, connect with African culture or cultivate your faith.

Mahogany Books

With one location at the **National Harbor** and another in D.C.’s Anacostia

neighborhood, Mahogany Books focuses on amplifying Black stories and authors. This summer, the bookstore held its first Black Books Matter Fest, bringing together readers, writers, and community members for a weekend celebrating literature and culture.

Loyalty Bookstores

With a location in **Silver Spring**, Loyalty Bookstores centers inclusion and representation through its book selection and events. The shop highlights authors of color and LGBTQ+ writers and hosts book clubs and readings.

Vision Christian Store

Vision Christian Store in **Clinton**, began with a vision to create scripture-themed apparel and has grown into a full Christian bookstore. What started as Armor of God Sportswear now includes Bibles, books and gifts that reflect the store’s mission of faith and encourage-

ment.

Everyone’s Place African Cultural Center

Based in Baltimore, Everyone’s Place African Cultural Center promotes learning and cultural pride “from pre-K to PhD and beyond.” The store carries books, art, jewelry, health products and spiritual items that connect to African and African American heritage.

Urban Bookstore

Tia Hamilton founded Urban Bookstore in Baltimore to create a space that highlights Black stories. The shop focuses on books by Black authors, features incarcerated writers and runs youth-focused programs and drives. Hamilton noted the challenge of drawing local readers—“My store is 70% white customers.”—but stresses the goal driving the work: “Knowledge is power.”

Chair Oriadha Hosts Press Conference Launching ‘Mothers First’ Program

By PRESS OFFICER
Prince George’s County Council Media

On Monday, December 8, Council Chair Krystal Oriadha (District 7) host[ed] a press conference to launch her new signature Black maternal health initiative: *Mothers First*.

Mothers First: A Community Care Initiative will ensure that new mothers across Prince George’s County receive the care, connection, and support they deserve immediately following the birth of their child and throughout early childhood. Built on the belief that thriving mothers are the bedrock of thriving communities, this initiative provides hands-on support, culturally grounded community spaces, and sustained emotional and wellness resources for mothers at every stage of early parenthood.

Powered by community partnerships, Mothers First relies on the hard work and dedication of organizations deeply rooted in serving families: Nu Momish and Community on the Frontline.

This transformative initiative will provide in-home and virtual

support to more than 1,000 District 7 mothers, including hands-on help with meals, laundry, light cleaning, and daily household tasks, giving mothers the time and space to rest, recover, and connect with their babies, as well as continued virtual support on topics requested by mothers. It will also orchestrate monthly ‘Mommy Meetups’, where moms from across the county can gather for fellowship, wellness activities, maternal health education, and a supportive village rooted in shared experience. Additionally, Mothers First will distribute curated care packages with essentials and comfort items to support physical recovery, mental health, and emotional care.

“For too long, mothers—especially Black mothers—have carried the weight of postpartum recovery and early parenting without the support they need,” said Chair Oriadha. “Mothers First fills that gap by offering culturally responsive connection, concrete assistance, and long-term care. I am committed to maternal health equity, and I believe that supporting mothers is one of the strongest investments we can make in our county’s future.”

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Sponsors Annual Food Giveaway

By ASHLEY STRAWBRIDGE
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated
Tau Delta Zeta Chapter

LAUREL, Md. (Dec. 5, 2025)—With looming uncertainty of the job market, the economy, and the increasing cost of groceries, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated – Tau Delta Zeta Chapter, its youth groups, community partners, and sponsors provided nourishment to almost 200 Laurel area families on Saturday, November 22, 2025. In partnership with the City of Laurel, the Distinguished Pearls Foundation, and the O-Six Ryderz Motorcycle Club of Baltimore, donations were collected to provide families with items for a full Thanksgiving meal.

Serving as this year’s pickup site, volunteers gathered early Saturday morning at the Craig A. Moe Multiservice Center to sort donations, including Thanksgiving dinner staples and dessert items. Before noon, cars lined the parking lot while others walked up for the drive-thru style distribution to collect their items. Laurel Police Department, along with the O-Six Ryderz, secured the area, serving as traffic control. This year’s sponsors included Beiler’s Meats, Costco Wholesale, Han’s Greens, Wegman’s, Whole Foods Market, Stoltzfuz Poultry, LLC, Sammies Produce, Miller Farms, Stars Studio, The Riehl Cheese Shoppe, Crossland High School, and Trinidad Baptist Church.

The annual event is a local initiative that supports the sorority’s national program: Z-HOPE, which stands for Zetas Helping Other People Excel. This event also supports the sorority’s international programmatic thrust, The Extraordinary Power of Social Justice, Health Justice, and

Economic Justice (S.H.E.) Z-HOPE and The Power of S.H.E. are initiatives of the international organization that serve as catalysts to address disparities within communities through service and advocacy.

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated was founded on January 16, 1920, in Washington, DC, on the belief that the social nature of sorority life should not overshadow the real mission of progressive organizations—to address societal mores, ills, prejudices, poverty, and health concerns of the day. Zeta Phi Beta has over 700 chapters in the United States, Germany, Japan and the Caribbean. For additional information visit www.zphib1920.org

Chartered on April 10, 2003, Tau Delta Zeta Chapter is headquartered in Laurel, Maryland. With the motto to “Expand and Serve” Tau Delta Zeta has made contributions to local organizations including the March of Dimes, Laurel Advocacy Resource Services and the Prince’s George County Department of Social Services. For additional information visit www.zphibtdz.org



PHOTOS COURTESY ZETA PHI BETA SORORITY, INCORPORATED TAU DELTA ZETA CHAPTER

Above, Member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc, and Member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc, working together to pack bags. Below, O-Six Ryderz with President of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc-Tau Delta Zeta Chapter, Sabrena Ball (Center), The Distinguished Pearls Foundation Chair, Deena Smith (Left), The Distinguished Pearls Foundation General Board Member, Eureka Thompkins (Far Left)



Around the County

Governor Moore Announces Appointment of Kevin M. Harris to Fill Maryland District 27 Senate Seat

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Dec. 5, 2025)—Governor Wes Moore today announced the appointment of Delegate Kevin M. Harris to fill the Maryland District 27 Senate seat representing Calvert, Charles, and Prince George’s counties. The seat was previously held by Acting Superintendent of the Maryland Department of State Police Michael A. Jackson, who was appointed by the governor in October.

“Kevin M. Harris is a decorated veteran and dedicated public servant who has represented Charles and Prince George’s counties with distinction,” said Gov. Moore. “His experience in the House of Delegates, combined with his service in uniform, demonstrates a deep commitment to our state and our country. I look forward to working with him in this new role in the Senate.”

Harris has served as a member of the Maryland House of Delegates since January 2023 representing Maryland District 27A, where he has been a resident for 16 years. Over the last three legislative sessions, he has served as a member of the House Appropriations Committee, as vice chair of the House Education and Economic Development Subcommittee, and as chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Youth, and Families. In addition to his legislative duties, Harris is a program manager for Leidos, LLC, working with the Defense Information System Agency.

Harris enlisted with the United States Navy in 1999, and deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan where he was awarded the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal. Harris was later selected to serve at the White House Communication Agency, where he spent five years and was honored with the 2007 All Star Award for his performance—an honor reserved for the top 10 percent of the agency.

Active in his community, Harris is a member of the Fort Washington alumni chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Greater Saint John Church in Upper Marlboro.

Harris earned his undergraduate degree from Washington Bible College and his graduate degree from Walden University.

Prince George’s County Department of the Environment Announces Organizational Changes

Renames divisions—Updates vision, mission statement, and slogan

LARGO, Md. (Dec. 1, 2025)—The Department of the Environment (DoE) is pleased to announce several important updates that will strengthen operations, enhance service delivery, and align our work with the strategic direction of DoE senior leadership.

Division Name Changes Effective December 1

To better reflect the scope and responsibilities of teams, the following divisions will adopt new names:

- Strategic Services will now be known as the **Strategic and Administrative Services Division (SASD)**, led by Associate Director Rushane Jones
- Resource Recovery will be renamed to the **Sustainable Waste Management Division (SWMD)**, led by Associate Director Marilyn Naumann
- Sustainability Division will be known as the **Flood Management and Environmental Resilience Division (FMERD)**, led by Associate Director Dawn Hawkins-Nixon
- All other DoE divisions will retain their current names and acronyms:
- Animal Services (ASD)**—Associate Director David Fisher
- Climate & Energy (CED)**—Associate Director Chris Akinbobola
- Community Engagement & Beautification (CEBD)**—Associate Director Rodney Taylor
- Stormwater Management (SMD)**— Associate Director Jeff DeHan
- Director’s Office (DO)**—Director Samuel B. Moki, Ph.D.

As part of DoE’s continued growth, the department is adopting a refreshed vision and mission statement, along with a new slogan that embodies its commitment to service and excellence.

New Vision Statement:

A County where a healthy, safe, equitable, and sustainable environment thrives to nurture life for its current and future residents.

New Mission Statement:

Driven by prompt, courteous, and responsive customer service, the Department of the Environment (DoE) is dedicated to elevating Prince George’s County by fostering a healthy, beautiful, and sustainable County through the timely and equitable delivery of innovative, effective, and environmentally friendly programs. These programs include providing clean water, flood control, recycling and waste management, litter prevention, sustainable animal management, and pet adoption in partnership with residents and other stakeholders.

New Slogan:

Educate. Empower. Elevate.

These updates reflect the strategic goals set by Director Samuel B. Moki, Ph.D., Deputy Director Anthony C. Bennett, and Deputy Director Derrick L. Coley.

As the department transitions to these changes, DoE remains committed to delivering excellent customer service and high-quality environmental programs for County residents, businesses, and stakeholders.

Visit our web page at <http://environment.mypgc.us> to learn more about our programs and services.

HEALTH *and* WELLNESS

First Lady Moore Launches Mental Health Awareness Campaign Across Maryland Radio Stations During Holiday Season

By PRESS OFFICER
Office of the First Lady

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Dec. 1, 2025)—First Lady Dawn Moore last week, in partnership with the Maryland Department of Health, launched a campaign to raise awareness about the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline during the holiday season. The campaign will broadcast on radio stations and audio-streaming platforms across Maryland from November 26, 2025 to January 10, 2026—a time when call volumes increase to the crisis centers.

“The holidays can be a challenging and stressful time for some Marylanders and this partnership reinforces our administration’s commitment to supporting all of our communities in their time of need,” said First Lady Moore. “The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is critical in our efforts to providing resources for those struggling. To all Marylanders, reach out to your fellow neighbors this holiday season, build community around those who are feeling alone or isolated, and let’s continue to do our part to leave no one behind.”

Marylanders can call, text, or chat 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, to connect with support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. From January to October 2025 alone, 988 has supported more than 126,000 Marylanders through calls, texts or chats.

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline connects Marylanders with trained crisis counselors who will listen, offer emotional support, and share resources for longer-term care. If needed, mobile cri-

sis responders are available for in-person support. Phone services are available in English and Spanish, with Language Line Solutions providing translation in 240 additional languages, in addition to American Sign Language services.

“Mental health is just as critical as physical health, and we recognize that the holidays can be a challenging time for many,” said Maryland Department of Health Secretary Dr. Meena Sesshamani. “Our partnership with the First Lady on this 988 awareness campaign is part of our year-round commitment to ensure every Marylander has access to the support they need. 988 is a trusted and vital resource for connecting our residents to care and reminding them that they are not alone.”

The Moore-Miller administration has invested over \$1.4 billion investments in mental health services for Maryland’s families. Throughout 2025, the Maryland Department of Health promotes the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and collaborates with local organizations and health departments to enhance accessibility to mental health resources focused on youth mental health, grief and loss, suicide prevention, and resources specifically designed for veterans and their families. Additionally, the department partners with the Children’s Mental Health Matters Campaign, and publishes vital resources, including the Children’s Behavioral Health Roadmap.

To learn more about the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or to get support, visit 988.maryland.gov.

Priority Partners Opening Two More Free Mini-Pantries in Maryland

Cupboards Project Grand Openings Target Food Insecurity in Maryland Communities

By PRESS OFFICER
Johns Hopkins Health Plans

HANOVER, Md. (Dec. 1, 2024)—Priority Partners’ Cupboards Project is celebrating the season of giving with the launch of two new free self-serve mini-pantries in Anne Arundel and Prince George’s counties.

On Sunday, Dec. 14, the first of the two Cupboards Project mini-pantries will be unveiled at noon at Living Word Seventh Day Adventist Church in Glen Burnie, Maryland. Then **at noon on Tuesday, Dec. 16, Priority Partners will unveil another new mini-pantry at CCI Health Services in Greenbelt, Maryland.** Priority Partners is inviting all to join these free Cupboards Project grand opening events during a time when many Maryland families are experiencing deepening food insecurity. Guests can expect refreshments, music, local community leaders and a guest appearance by Cubby Bear, Priority Partners’ beloved mascot.

Started in 2021 to address food insecurity in the communities it serves, Priority Partners’ Cupboards Project has placed seven mini-pantries in Maryland neighborhoods and launched three “Club on the Go” mobile pantries. Working under the motto “Take What You Need, Leave What You Can,” the custom-built mini-pantries provide free healthy food and nutrition resources to remote or underserved neighborhoods.

The new mini-pantries in Glen Burnie and Greenbelt bring the total number of free-standing mini-pantries to nine, with more to come! Join us, rain or shine, for these exciting community events on Dec. 14, from noon to 1:30 p.m., at Living Word Seventh Day Adventist Church, 508 Aquahart Rd., Glen Burnie, MD 21061, and on **Dec. 16, from noon to 1:30 p.m. at**



HELP US TAKE ON FOOD INSECURITY IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Please join us for a Priority Partners Cupboard Grand Opening!

Tuesday, December 16 at Noon

CCI Health Services
7615 Ora Glen Drive
Greenbelt, MD 20770



CCI Health Services, 7615 Ora Glen Dr., Greenbelt, MD 20770. Let’s tackle food insecurity in our communities together.

The Cupboards Project is supported by the generous donations of our community partners. If you cannot make it to the event, we welcome your kind donations in support of the project.

Learn more about the Priority Partners Cupboards Project at www.prioritypartnerscupboards.org.

Priority Partners is one of nine managed care organizations authorized by the state of Maryland to provide health care

services for over 330,000 Medicaid, Maryland Children’s Health Program (MCHP) and Medical Assistance for Families recipients. Priority Partners is owned by Johns Hopkins Health Plans and the Maryland Community Health System. The mission is to provide high-value health care services that optimize individual wellness, improve community health and maintain the strength and viability of the plan. The vision is to be a national leader in Medicaid managed care, the plan of choice in Maryland, and a collaborative, innovative force for change. Learn more at www.ppmco.org.

Chesapeake Life Center Winter Workshops and Groups Offer Pathways to Healing

By ELYZABETH MARCUSSEN
Hospice of the Chesapeake

PASADENA, Md. (Dec. 2, 2025)—Winter can often be a season that deepens the ache of loss. Chesapeake Life Center offers many workshops and support groups designed to bring light, connection and hope to those who are grieving.

From creative art experiences and nature-informed healing to skill-building workshops and supportive community groups, these programs provide gentle spaces to honor loved ones, explore complex emotions and find strength for the season ahead.

With options for adults, teens and children, both in-person and virtual, the grief experts of Hospice of the Chesapeake are committed to helping individuals navigate loss with care, community and meaningful pathways toward healing.

WORKSHOPS AND SPECIAL PROGRAMS

- **Visioning Through the Valleys: A Vision Board Experience for the Grieving Heart**—This workshop offers a gentle, guided space to honor what you’ve lost while envisioning the life you’re still becoming. Together, participants will explore how grief shapes identity, purpose and the future. Then, everyone will create vision boards that reflect both remembrance and renewal. Participants will leave with clarity, intention and a visual reminder of their strength. It will be held from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 6, on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena, Maryland. The cost is free.
- **Branches of the Heart for Kids and Teens:** Remembering Loved Ones Through Nature—When someone we love dies, it can feel like winter inside our hearts. But just like the trees, we hold strength and life beneath the surface. In this nature-informed workshop, kids and teens ages 6 to 18 are invited to explore their grief and

honor loved ones through art, reflection and gentle time outdoors. It will be held from 10 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Jan. 17, in the Center for Hope & Healing on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena. The cost is free.

- **Hot Chocolate and Grief Bingo**—Pour a delicious cup of hot chocolate and share what’s on your mind about grief through a bingo game developed to help explore your thoughts and feelings about your loss. Get support from grief counselors and others who are experiencing grief. It will be held from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 28, on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena. The cost is free.
- **In Winter Deep: A Workshop for Coping Beyond the Holidays**—The winter holiday season has now passed. The days remain short and the nights long, and grief can feel closer, ever-present in the darkness of this time of year. Yet, the winter season, with its quiet depth, offers an opportunity to work through the pain of loss with the restorative power of rest and reflection. This post-holiday workshop can help participants find a way through grief in this mid-winter time. It will be held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 29, at **9500 Medical Center Drive, Suite 250, Largo, Maryland.** The cost is free.
- **Creating Hope: Therapeutic Art Exercises in Griefwork for Teens and Adults**—Creating can help us express things we have no words for, discover more about ourselves and glean beauty through our sorrow. In this workshop, people will participate in a therapeutic art project to help with personal grief work and connect with one another. This workshop is open to teens, as well as adults. Supplies are provided. No art skills are required. It will be held from 1 to 2:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 7, at the Burnett Center for Hope and Healing, 4559 Sixes Road, Prince Frederick,

Maryland. The cost is \$10 per session, which pays for supplies.

- **Nature’s Healing Power: A Grief Support Group Series** is a free, nature-informed program that will include immersive walks in nature, time spent focusing on the cycle of the seasons and working with natural objects to contain and express the grief experience. It will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursdays, Feb. 19 through March 12, at **Lake Artemesia Natural Area, 8200 55th Ave., College Park, Maryland.**
- **Pillow Making Workshop**—Bring one of your loved one’s button-down shirts or T-shirts and receive step-by-step support and guidance to make a pillow to remember them by. No sewing experience required. Light refreshments will be served. Only 10 spaces are available, so people should register as soon as possible. It will be held from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, Feb. 28 on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena. The cost is \$10.
- **All-Ages Grief Karaoke**—Join in an all-ages afternoon of music filled with fun and karaoke. Honor your loved one by singing songs that they loved or songs that you shared. The group can sing it together or you can be solo on the mic. Find commonalities with people who have also lost loved ones and encounter different music genres. It will be held from 1 to 2:30 p.m. Saturday, March 21, on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena. The cost is free.

MONTHLY GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS:

- **Drop-In Grief Support Groups** are open to anyone grieving. Groups offer participants an opportunity to share their feelings and obtain support from others who are experiencing loss. There is no fee. These groups will meet in Calvert County as follows:
 - North Beach Senior Center, 9010

- Chesapeake Ave., North Beach, Maryland, from 1 to 2 p.m. Wednesdays, Jan. 7, Feb. 4 and March 4.
- Southern Pines Senior Center, 20 Appeal Lane, Lusby, Maryland, from 2 to 3 p.m. Tuesdays, Jan. 13, Feb. 10 and March 10.
- Calvert Pines Senior Center, 450 W. Dares Beach Road, Prince Frederick, from 1 to 2 p.m. Tuesdays, Jan. 20, Feb. 17 and March 17.
- **SoulCollage Studio**—Join others for a time to create unique collages reflecting and expressing loss and the journey through life. It will meet from 2 to 5 p.m. on Mondays, Jan. 5 and March 2 at **9500 Medical Center Drive, Suite 250, Largo.** The supply fee is \$10.
- **Loss of Parent or Parental Figure Support Group** provides space for those grieving the loss of a parent or parental figure to come together to feel supported in their grief. The group will meet from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on Thursdays, Jan. 8, Feb. 12 and March 12 on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena. The cost is free.
- **Loss of Life Partner Evening Group**—This support group is for individuals grieving the loss of a spouse or life partner that happened more than 13 months ago. It offers a safe space for individuals to connect with others experiencing a similar loss. It will meet from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Tuesdays, Jan. 13, Feb. 10 and March 10 on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena. The cost is free.
- **Navigating Grief: A Support Group for Those Coping with Loss.** This monthly support group is for anyone grieving the death of a loved one. Together, participants will explore the many layers of grief, from understanding the grieving process (Grief 101) to learning how to care for ourselves, find moments of joy and stay connected to loved ones even after their passing. This is a safe and welcoming space for sharing, support and healing. It will take place from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Tuesdays, Jan. 13, Feb. 10 and March 10, on the John & Cathy

- Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena. The cost is free.
- **Child Loss Support Group** is for parents grieving the death of a child, regardless of age or circumstance. It will meet at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, March 16, in the Center for Hope & Healing on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena. The cost is free.

VIRTUAL GRIEF SUPPORT

- **SoulCollage Virtual Support Group for Loss and Transition** is a free group with participants creating collages to commemorate lost loved ones and visually journal the grief process. It is a time to virtually share and process unique collages reflecting and expressing the journey through life. The group will meet from 6 to 8 p.m. Monday, Feb. 2, via Zoom.
 - **Loss of Life Partner/Spouse Virtual Group** is a free group for individuals grieving the death of a spouse or life partner. It will meet from 10:30 a.m. to noon Tuesdays, Jan. 13, Feb. 10 and March 10, via Zoom.
 - **Suicide Loss Support Group**—Come together for an evening of connecting with others online over the sudden loss of a loved one. This monthly group will explore topics such as guilt, anger and the aftermath of suicide. It will meet via Zoom from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Mondays, Jan. 26, Feb. 23 and March 23. The cost is free.
- Unless noted, groups and workshops are intended for adults ages 18 and older. Except for drop-in groups, registration is required and can be completed by calling 888-501-7077 or emailing griefinfo@chesapeakelifecenter.org. Visit www.hospicechesapeake.org/events for a complete listing of in-person and virtual groups and workshops for adults and children.

Chesapeake Life Center, a program service of Hospice of the Chesapeake, serves hospice family members and the community with bereavement services and activities aimed at enhancing the quality of life for those grieving the loss of a loved one. For details, visit www.chesapeakelifecenter.org.

COMMENTARY

Marc Morial

President and CEO, National Urban League



To Be Equal:

New Orleans Deserves Law Enforcement That Is “Fair, Focused, and Lawful”

“New Orleans is a city with a soul. Our culture, our neighborhoods, our traditions, and our deep sense of community shape how we live and how we keep each other safe. Any law enforcement activity in our city, including federal operations, must honor that reality. It must reflect an understanding of our local laws, our norms, and our people.”

Of all the cities in the nation, New Orleans perhaps best exemplifies the virtues of the American

melting pot. Just as our signature dish, gumbo, depends upon the many distinct ingredients and culinary styles that come together to create something rich, flavorful, and unsurpassed, New Orleans’s beauty and strength comes from the interwoven cultures and traditions of its diverse population.

Any federal law enforcement operation in New Orleans, especially one focused on immigration, must respect those cultures and traditions.

This week, I was proud to stand with Congressman Troy A. Carter, Sr., New Orleans Mayor-Elect Helena Moreno, New Orleans City Councilmembers, advocates from civil and immigration rights groups, and faith and other community leaders to demand transparency, safeguards against discriminatory enforcement, and humanitarian protections during the ongoing federal immigration sweep of Operation Catahoula Crunch.

Immigrant communities power New Orleans’ hospitality industry, our restaurants, our music, and our traditions. When they suffer, the entire city suffers. Local hotel operators and restaurateurs are already worried about staffing shortages due to fear of raids, which could impact tourism and Mardi Gras celebrations.

Immigration enforcement in New Orleans already has created fear and uncertainty among thousands of families in New Orleans. People are staying home, businesses are closing, and workers are afraid to show up—even those with legal status.

This is not just an immigrant issue—it’s an economic issue. When immigrant workers disappear, restaurants close, hotels struggle, and tourism declines. That hurts every New Orleanian.

Families are terrified of being torn apart. Many immigrants cannot “go back” because their countries are plagued by violence or instability. De-

portation is not just relocation—it’s a life-threatening risk for many.

Community organizations like Familias Unidas en Acción are stepping up to provide food and support, but they are no substitute for fair and humane policies.

These raids are part of a larger national trend of aggressive immigration enforcement under the Trump administration, which has sparked protests and unrest in cities across the country.

I join Rep. Carter in requesting a full field hearing to be held in New Orleans so that local leaders can directly address and assess these pressing issues openly, among the people who are most affected.

Immigration is not a threat—it is a strength. America’s greatness comes from its diversity and its ability to welcome those seeking a better life.

We must reject fear-based policies and embrace solutions that keep families together, protect workers, and strengthen our economy. Immigration reform should reflect our values: fairness, opportunity, and respect for human dignity. New Orleans thrives when immigrants thrive. Protecting them protects the soul of our city—and the promise of our nation.

—December 6, 2025

PGCPS Interim Superintendent Helps Lead National Conversation on School Leadership in New AASA Study

New national report underlines Dr. Joseph’s early focus on community engagement and trust-building as PGCPS moves into a pivotal planning year.

By PRESS OFFICER
Prince George’s County Public Schools

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Dec. 4, 2025)—Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) Interim Superintendent Dr. Shawn Joseph is a contributing author of the newly released 2025 American Superintendent Study: Mid-Decade Update from AASA, The School Superintendents Association—a national report examining how school system leaders are navigating rising political pressures, changing community expectations, and the growing complexity of the superintendency.

Dr. Joseph co-authored Chapter 5: Community Engagement in the Superintendency: Leading in an Era of Division, offering a research-based analysis of how superintendents build trust and lead in polarized environments.

The report’s release serves as a strong bookend to his first 100 days at PGCPS, reflecting his emphasis on building trust and strengthening community ties as core elements of effective district leadership.

“As superintendents, we stand at the intersection of politics, pedagogy, and public accountability,” Dr. Joseph said during a national briefing.

“Our legitimacy rests on our ability to cultivate trust across lines of race, class, geography, and ideology.”

National Findings Mirror the Realities of Large, Diverse Districts Like PGCPS

The AASA study draws on responses from more than 1,000 superintendents nationwide and points to several trends that resonate with the work underway in Prince George’s County:

- Community support remains strong but uneven. While 91 percent of superintendents report feeling somewhat or very supported, only 37 percent of Black superintendents say they feel “very supported,” compared with 48 percent of White superintendents.
- Engagement has intensified since the pandemic. Two-thirds of superintendents now involve community stakeholders in advisory or planning activities monthly or more often.
- Political division continues to shape district leadership. Leaders report rising conflict around issues such as curriculum, DEI, book challenges, and LGBTQ+ inclusion—pressures that disproportionately affect superintendents of color. These findings reinforce the national significance

of the work underway in PGCPS, where Dr. Joseph has prioritized clear communication, coalition-building, and expanded community voice as core elements of his leadership.

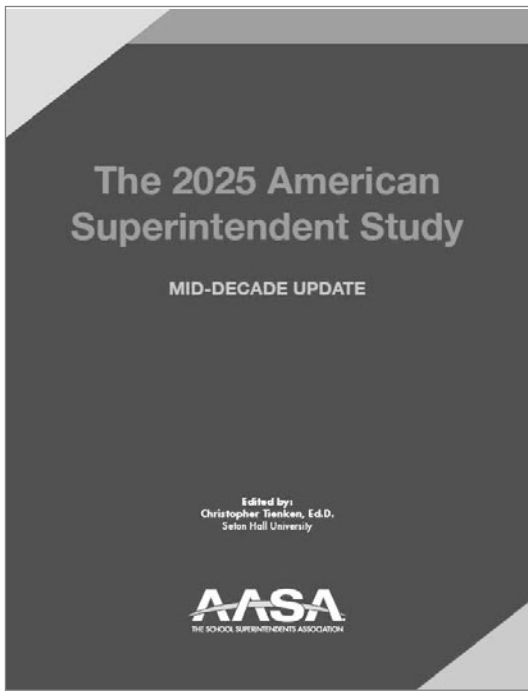
Beyond the First 100 Days: Leading Nationally While Guiding PGCPS Through a Critical Planning Period

Now just beyond his first 100 days and entering a pivotal FY27 budget planning cycle, Dr. Joseph’s inclusion in the AASA study reinforces his leadership as PGCPS begins shaping a strategic plan grounded in partnership, transparency, and accelerating student growth.

The report’s focus on superintendents as bridge-builders mirrors Dr. Joseph’s early work across the county—expanded listening sessions, steady school visits, and direct engagement with labor partners, the Board of Education, families, and community stakeholders. His approach prioritizes ensuring every group has a voice as the district moves into a decisive planning period.

“Trust cannot be episodic,” Dr. Joseph said. “It must be constant, transparent, and deeply human.”

Upcoming engagement opportunities are available at www.pgcps.org.



Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS), one of the nation’s 20 largest school districts, has more than 200 schools and centers, more than 133,000 students and nearly 20,000 employees. The school system serves a diverse student population from urban, suburban and rural communities located in the Washington, DC suburbs. PGCPS is nationally recognized for college and career-readiness programs that provide students with unique learning opportunities, including dual enrollment and language immersion.

TSA Introduces New \$45 Fee Option for Travelers Without REAL ID Starting February 1

Agency will refer passengers to the fee-based TSA “Confirm.ID” payment option if they do not present a valid, acceptable ID at checkpoints

By PRESS OFFICER
TSA

WASHINGTON (Dec. 1, 2025)—The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) announced today that it will refer all passengers who do not present an acceptable form of ID and still want to fly an option to pay a \$45 fee to use a modernized alternative identity verification system, TSA Confirm.ID, to establish identity at security checkpoints beginning on February 1, 2026.

Travelers will be able to pay \$45 to use TSA Confirm.ID for a 10-day travel period. TSA urges travelers who do not have a REAL ID to schedule an appointment at their local DMV to update their ID as soon as possible.

Acceptable forms of ID include:

- REAL ID-compliant driver’s licenses or other state photo identity cards issued by Department of Motor Vehicles (or equivalent)
- If you are not sure if your ID complies with REAL ID, check with your state Department of Motor Vehicles.
- A temporary driver’s license is not an acceptable form of identification.
- State-issued Enhanced Driver’s License (EDL) or Enhanced ID (EID)
- U.S. passport
- U.S. passport card
- DHS trusted traveler cards (Global Entry, NEXUS, SENTRI, FAST)
- U.S. Department of Defense ID, including IDs issued to dependents
- Permanent resident card

- Border crossing card
- An acceptable photo ID issued by a federally recognized Tribal Nation/Indian Tribe, including Enhanced Tribal Cards (ETCs)
- HSPD-12 PIV card
- Foreign government-issued passport
- Canadian provincial driver’s license or Indian and Northern Affairs Canada card
- Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC)
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Employment Authorization Card (I-766)
- U.S. Merchant Mariner Credential
- Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC)

All travelers without an acceptable ID, including those who present a non-REAL ID-compliant state driver’s license or ID, will be referred to the optional TSA Confirm.ID process for identity verification upon TSA check-in and prior to entering the security line. This process will differ airport to airport, and TSA is working with private industry to proactively offer online payment options prior to arrival at the airport.

The REAL ID law was signed more than 20 years ago, but previous presidential administrations failed to properly implement it. Under President Trump’s leadership, the law was finally implemented and enforced by Secretary Kristi Noem as of May 7, 2025.

Currently, more than 94% of passengers already use their REAL ID or other acceptable forms of identification. TSA expects increased wait times for passengers who do not provide an acceptable ID.

“Identity verification is essential to traveler safety, because it keeps terrorists, criminals, and illegal aliens out of the skies and other domestic transportation systems such as rail,” said Senior Official Performing the Duties of Deputy Administrator for TSA Adam Stahl. “The vast majority of travelers present acceptable identification like REAL IDs and passports, but we must ensure everyone who flies is who they say they are. Beginning February 1, travelers who do not present an acceptable form of ID at our security checkpoints and still want to fly can pay a \$45 fee and undergo the TSA Confirm.ID process. This fee ensures the cost to cover verification of an insufficient ID will come from the traveler, not the taxpayer. The security of the traveling public is our top priority, so we urge all travelers to get a REAL ID or other acceptable form of ID as soon as possible to avoid delays and potentially miss flights.”

TSA urges all travelers who do not have a REAL ID to pay the fee online before traveling. For passengers who arrive at the airport without paying the fee, information about how to pay for the TSA Confirm.ID option will be available at marked locations at or near the checkpoint in most airports. Travelers who undergo TSA Confirm.ID processing at an airport should expect delays.

TSA’s list of acceptable forms of ID can be found at TSA.gov/travel/security-screening/identification.

For more information on REAL ID, please visit TSA.gov/real-id or text 275-872 (“AskTSA”) or @AskTSA with questions.

We are moving ...

The Prince George’s Post’s new physical address as of December 13, 2025:

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BUSINESS AND FINANCE

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

About Tax Filing Status and Medicare

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’m trying to figure out if I should change my IRS filing status to “Married – Filing Jointly” prior to getting reviewed for my Medicare Part B and Part D. My current IRS status is “Married – Filing Single” and I noticed this filing status is more stringent. I will be turning 62 this year (2025) and I’ve read that Medicare will review my income 2 years prior to turning 65. Any input would be appreciated. **Signed: Uncertain Senior**

Dear Uncertain: Your IRS tax filing status has no bearing on your eligibility for Medicare Part B (coverage for outpatient healthcare services) or Medicare Part D (insurance coverage for prescription drugs). Medicare is an individual healthcare program, so enrolling in Medicare provides coverage for you (only), not your spouse (your spouse’s Medicare eligibility will be individually evaluated).

What your IRS filing status may affect is the amount of your Medicare Part B and Part D premiums. There is a Medicare provision called “IRMAA” (Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount), which sets the income thresholds on which your Medicare premiums are based, and those thresholds are different if you file your income tax as a single, or as “married/filing jointly.” The IRMAA thresholds can change annually, and there’s no way to yet determine what they will be when you are able to enroll in Medicare at age 65 (they are currently \$106,000 if you file as a single, and \$212,000 if you file your taxes as “married/jointly”). If your “provisional income” (your combined income from all sources) exceeds the threshold for your filing status, you will pay higher (than standard) Medicare Part B and Part D premiums. If your income is lower than the threshold, you will pay only whatever the standard Medicare Part B premium is for the year you start Medicare, and there will be no supplemental premium for your Part D coverage. For information, the IRMAA supplements are progressive—that is, the more you exceed the threshold by, the higher your IRMAA premium supplement will be. To see the current IRMAA thresholds and supplements (again, these will likely change when you are eligible for Medicare): www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/2025-medicare-parts-b-premiums-and-deductibles.

You are correct that your Medicare premium, when you enroll, will be determined by your total income from 2 years prior. So, if you plan to enroll in Medicare at age 65 (sometime in 2028), it is your 2026 income which will determine your Part B and Part D premiums, and that income will be defined by your 2026 income tax return. Note, too, that Medicare premiums are reevaluated each year, based upon your IRS income tax return from 2 years prior.

FYI, there are advantages to filing your income tax as “married/jointly” (vs. married/filing separately), and those are best evaluated by your tax advisor (we are not tax advisors here at the AMAC Foundation). And while it’s true that the IRMAA thresholds are higher when you file as “married/jointly,” it’s also true that your total income as a married couple will be used when determining your IRMAA premiums for Medicare. So, once again, it is probably best to consult with a qualified income tax advisor for guidance on whether it is best, financially, for you to change how you file your income tax in 2026, considering that you will be enrolling in Medicare in 2028.

One final thing: If you are still working and have “creditable” healthcare coverage from your employer (“creditable” is a group plan with at least 20 participants), then you can delay enrolling in Medicare until your employer coverage ends (thus temporarily avoiding the Medicare premiums). In other words, if you have creditable healthcare coverage from an employer, you don’t have to enroll in Medicare immediately at age 65.

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 ssadvisior@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.

SCORE

New Year’s Resolutions: Are You Ready?

December 16, 2025 • 12 p.m.

Location: Online • Cost: Free of Charge

Register: <https://www.score.org/business-education>

How many New Year’s Resolutions have you made in your life? How many have you kept?

Dreaming of starting a business is something many people do all year long, but turning that dream into reality takes more than excitement. It requires commitment and a clear understanding of the work involved in building a business from the ground up.

We’ll talk through what it really takes to start a business: time, research, effort, and the mindset needed to stay motivated when things get challenging. Whether you’re simply exploring the idea or truly ready to begin, this workshop will help you think through the realities of entrepreneurship.

Springdale Resident Will Mapp Graduates From Leadership Maryland’s Executive Program

By PRESS OFFICER
Qlarant

EASTON, Md. (Dec. 3, 2025)—Leadership Maryland announced today that Will Mapp, CTO at Qlarant, Inc., has completed Leadership Maryland’s Executive Program, a professional development program dedicated to building a better Maryland by harnessing the strength of its local business and community leaders. Leadership Maryland honored Mapp, a resident of Springdale, MD, and the entire Executive Program Class of 2025 at its 32nd graduation ceremony held December 2 at the Westin Annapolis. He is now a member of Leadership Maryland’s powerful alumni network, consisting of more than 1,600 esteemed leaders from all over the state.

Mapp was one of 51 individuals chosen by a committee to complete the eight-month, hands-on learning program. The class participated in an orientation and closing retreat that book-ended five, two-day sessions focused on Maryland’s five main geographic regions. Topics of discussion and review included the most vital issues impacting economic development, education, health and human services, criminal justice, the environment, and multi-culturalism/diversity across the state. More than 100 experts representing Maryland’s business, government, education, and non-profit communities served as panelists and guest speakers.

“On behalf of our staff, board, and membership, I congratulate the Executive Program Class of 2025 and Emerging Leader 2nd Class on their incredible achievement,” said David Fike ’16 (LM), president and CEO, Leadership Maryland. “The graduates of both programs have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to personal and professional growth, and I am confident they will continue to drive meaningful change in their communities



PHOTO COURTESY QLARANT

Will Mapp, III, Qlarant Chief Technology Officer

and across Maryland as part of our alumni network.”

The Executive Program is open to senior-level executives with significant achievements in their careers and/or their communities. Ideal Leadership Maryland members have a desire to learn more about Maryland’s most critical issues and a personal commitment to be a force for positive change in their organizations, their communities, and their state.

“What a terrific experience it is to be part of this program,” noted Mr. Mapp. “Qlarant has been a strong supporter of Leadership Maryland through the years, and I personally was impressed by the quality of the team, the leaders, and the participants.”

Qlarant is a not-for-profit, nationally respected leader in fighting fraud, waste, and abuse, improving program quality, and optimizing performance. The company uses subject matter experts and innovative data science and technology to help organiza-

tions see risks, solve problems, and seize opportunities. Qlarant provides customized solutions for state, federal and commercial industries across the nation. The Qlarant Foundation—the mission arm of the organization—has provided over \$7 million in grants to charities throughout Maryland and the District of Columbia. Qlarant employs nearly 600 people and has a 50-year record of accomplishment improving the performance of some of the Nation’s most important programs. Headquartered in Easton, MD, Qlarant has offices throughout the country. Qlarant is a five-time winner of the Top Workplaces award. For more information, visit [www.qlarant.com](http://www qlarant.com) or contact boosp@qlarant.com

Leadership Maryland is a statewide non-profit offering professional development programs dedicated to building a better Maryland by harnessing the strength of its business and community leaders. Established in 1992, Leadership Maryland’s Executive Program selects as many as 53 diverse and accomplished senior-level leaders from Maryland’s public and private sectors each year to come together as a class for an eight-month learning program focused on the state’s most vital social, economic and environmental issues. And new in 2024, Leadership Maryland’s Emerging Leader Program brings together a class of 30–40 of the state’s rising stars and gives them the skills and tools they need to advance in their careers. With an alumni network comprised of leaders from all industries and regions of the state, Leadership Maryland has established thousands of Marylanders on their career leadership path, equipped with the knowledge, skills, and connections needed to influence positive change. For more information about Leadership Maryland, please visit leadershipmd.org, call 410-841-2101 or email info@leadershipmd.org.

Atkinson Named President & CEO of People Encouraging People

People Encouraging People, with an office in Hyattsville, is a non-profit providing life-changing behavioral healthcare and support.

New PEP leader has proven record of fiscal stewardship, mission-driven impact

By PRESS OFFICER

People Encouraging People

BALTIMORE (Dec. 3, 2025)—Aaron Atkinson has been named President and Chief Executive Officer of People Encouraging People (PEP), a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering recovery, resiliency, and independence for individuals with mental health support needs living in Baltimore City and five surrounding counties.

Atkinson brings more than 30 years of experience in the nonprofit sector and a proven record of transformational leadership, fiscal stewardship, and mission-driven impact to his new position. Most recently, he served as Chief Executive Officer of The Arc Western Montana, where he led strategic growth initiatives that improved and expanded services, strengthened financial sustainability, and advanced organizational culture.

“Aaron is an accomplished advocate for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and behavioral health diagnoses,” says PEP Board Chair Chamberlain Diala. “His success at The Arc Western Montana, coupled with his extensive background in directing multi-site operations, eliminating multimillion-



PHOTO COURTESY
PEOPLE ENCOURAGING PEOPLE

Aaron Atkinson has been named President and Chief Executive Officer of People Encouraging People (PEP)

dollar deficits, and enhancing program quality and staff engagement, will be instrumental in positioning PEP as one of Maryland’s top employers and expanding our service offerings in the jurisdictions in which we operate.”

Founded in 1982, People Encouraging People provides an array of behavioral health and supportive services across Maryland, including psychiatric rehabilitation, outpatient mental health, substance

use treatment, and housing support. Guided by the principles of recovery and resiliency, PEP partners with individuals and communities to promote hope, health, and opportunity.

“PEP has a long and powerful history of helping people thrive through comprehensive, strength-based mental health services,” says Atkinson. “I am honored to join this mission-driven team and look forward to building on PEP’s legacy of providing services and supporting people in their mental health and well-being journeys.”

Prior to The Arc Western Montana, Atkinson held executive leadership roles with Community Options, Inc. and The Arc Baltimore. He has also served on multiple state and national boards and committees, including the National Conference of Executives, the Montana Association of Community Disability Services, and the Governor-appointed Mental Disabilities Board of Visitors.

A graduate of several executive leadership programs, including Leadership Baltimore County, Leadership Missoula, and the Maryland Leadership Institute, Atkinson holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Prescott College and a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Maryland.

Ceremony from A1

topics from the curriculum. Through weekly classes, participants explored the History, Present, and Future of Prince George’s County, Planning 101, the Development Review Process, Building Healthy, Sustainable and Resilient Communities, Multimodal Transportation and Street Safety, and PGAtlas.com—a free public web application and online mapping tool.

For more information on the Neighborhood Planning Academy, visit: <https://academy.pgplanning.com>. Prince George’s County residents and stakehold-

ers may join the mailing list to receive announcements on applications for the Spring 2026 cohort and upcoming courses.

The Prince George’s County Planning Department of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) is responsible for preserving, protecting, and managing the county’s resources through high-quality planning services and growth management guidance. Our mission is to promote economic vitality, environmental sustainability, design excellence, and quality development in Prince George’s County. Visit our web-

site, www.pgplanning.org, to learn how you can become engaged in shaping the future of your community.

Assistance

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission encourages the participation of persons with disabilities in all its programs and services. Register at least a minimum of two weeks in advance of the program start date to request and receive a disability accommodation. Call the Public Affairs Office at 301-952-3038, email PublicAffairs@ppd.mncppc.org, or complete the online form.

EarthTalk®
Q&A

Which Colleges Prioritize Sustainability and Climate Change?

By Tim Weighart | November 28, 2025

Dear EarthTalk:
Do any colleges require students to take classes on sustainability or climate change in order to graduate?
—D.F.P. Norwalk, CT

Teaching young people about climate change is essential if future generations are understand and be prepared for the extreme weather and environmental disruptions that are accelerating. Integrating climate literacy into higher education can ensure that students, no matter their major, gain the tools to address environmental challenges in their careers and communities. While most American colleges still don’t require such coursework, several institutions have made notable progress recently.

One big development is at the University of California San Diego, which in Fall 2024 launched the Jane Teranes Climate Change Education Requirement. All first-time, first-year students entering that term—the Class of 2028—must now take an approved climate-related course before graduating. UC San Diego created a menu of over 50 classes across some 20 disciplines, allowing students to fulfill the requirement without adding time to their degrees. To qualify, each course must devote at least 30 percent of its content to climate change and address multiple aspects of the issue, such as climate science, societal impacts, and solution-focused learning. Roughly 7,000 students are part of the first cohort subject to the new rule.

Arizona State University introduced a similar plan for Fall 2024. As part of its redesigned General Studies Gold curriculum, all incoming undergraduates must complete a three-credit sustainability course. The plan is broader than climate change alone, focusing heavily on climate systems, human–environment interactions, and global environmental challenges.

Another major step is at San Francisco State University, which will require every incoming student to complete a course on climate justice. The revised Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action requirement expands the university’s focus from general sustainability to the unequal impacts of climate change on historically marginalized communities. Over 100 existing courses are being updated so they align with the new climate justice standards.

A few smaller institutions adopted climate or sustainability requirements years ago. Dickinson College implemented one in 2015, and Goucher College has required environmental sustainability coursework since 2007. Unity Environmental University in Maine has long built environmental literacy into its core curriculum. Even at schools without graduation mandates, many are expanding climate-related offerings, opening new sustainability schools, or weaving climate themes throughout the curriculum. Still, most U.S. colleges have yet to adopt institution-wide requirements, slowed by bureaucratic processes, staffing limitations, and regional political sensitivities.

CONTACTS: Climate Change Is the New Liberal Arts, hechinger-



PHOTO CREDIT: RODDY SCHEER

University of California San Diego, Arizona State University, San Francisco State University, Dickinson College, Goucher College, and Maine’s Unity Environmental University are among the colleges requiring students to take coursework related to climate/sustainability.

report.org/climate-change-is-the-new-liberal-arts-colleges-build-environmental-lessons-into-degrees/.

EarthTalk® is produced by Roddy Scheer & Doug Moss for the 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. See more at <https://emagazine.com>. To donate, visit <https://earthtalk.org>. Send questions to: question@earthtalk.org

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