

January 11, 2022

Honorable Joanne C. Benson, Chair  
Prince George's County Senate Delegation  
James Senate Office Building – Room 214  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Honorable Nick Charles, Chair  
Prince George's County House Delegation  
Lowe House Office Building – Room 207  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Re: **2022 Prince George's County General Assembly Legislative Priorities**

Dear Senator Benson and Delegate Charles:

As we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, we must ensure that we are doing all we can to keep our communities growing, thriving and realizing their potential. As the State of Maryland is projected to have a \$6 billion dollar surplus, we have an unprecedented opportunity to do just that. The Alsobrooks Administration, the County Council and our partner agencies throughout the County will pursue the following legislative agenda during the 2022 Maryland General Assembly Session. We look forward to working with you to advocate for these priorities and ultimately help foster an even prouder and stronger Prince George's County.

### **Continued Support For Education Funding**

Operating and Capital funding for our Public K-12 education system continues to be one of the County's leading priorities. While the pandemic has caused a significant amount of expenditures necessary to create an equitable and accessible online learning environment, we must make sure funding for education continues to expand so that all of our K-12 students have the opportunity to be successful. We sincerely appreciate the stand that you and your colleagues in the General Assembly took in the override of Governor Hogan's veto of the Blueprint for Maryland, as this bold and innovative funding and accountability formula for education will help put our children on the path to educational excellence. We also appreciate your efforts to ensure that the County does not have to begin providing the local operating funding requirements as early as the original bill required. We look forward to identifying creative ways to meet our obligations as we continue to address and recover from the effects of the pandemic.

We are equally appreciative of the Delegation's collaboration in our efforts to meet school construction challenges. Your support has been essential to the creation and funding of our County's innovative Alternative Construction Financing/Public-Private Partnership (ACF/P3) Program. We look forward to continued collaboration in the working group established to embark on the second round of schools to be constructed through the P3 program.

**Transportation**

**Arena Drive Interchange** – The draft FY 2022-2027 state Consolidated Transportation Plan (CTP) contains funding for the design and construction of this critical interchange that will serve as a gateway to our hospital and the development taking place in downtown Largo.

Approximately \$8 million has been appropriated to begin the interchange process and advance the Central Avenue Corridor Connector Trail. We must ensure that this funding remains in the final draft of the CTP.

**Blue Line Corridor** – This transformational development effort stretches from the D.C. line, down Route 214 into downtown Largo. During the 2021 General Assembly, working with both the Governor and our State Delegation, we were able to secure \$17.6 million and we will be seeking an additional \$21.4 million to continue road infrastructure improvements, the creation of complete streets, protected bike lanes and walk paths, and a street grid for developable parcels to keep this project moving forward.

**Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)** – The draft State CTP also includes funding to move forward the interchange project at the Greenbelt Metro Station and we must ensure that this funding remains in the final CTP, while also continuing to advocate for funding for: the expeditious completion of the Purple Line project and associated MD 193 corridor improvements as recommended by the M-NCPPC SPACES study; transit projects around the New Carrollton, Largo and Branch Avenue Metro Stations; as well as the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit project.

**Road Safety** – Several road projects are critical to improving vehicle and pedestrian safety along our roadways, helping to further our Vision Zero efforts to eliminate serious traffic-related injuries and fatalities by 2040. While we are pleased that the long-awaited interchange at Kerby Hill Road and Indian Head Highway is scheduled for completion by the end of 2021, we must continue to advocate for funding that will help improve safety, including additional interchanges and protected bicycle lanes along Route 210 and widening Maryland 197 between Route 50 and Route 450. Ensuring these projects remain in the State CTP is critical to improving safety along our roadways. We also look forward to your support in adding increased safety measures for off-road vehicles as an area of focus for the statewide and local Vision Zero programs.

**Economic Development and Housing**

As we continue to navigate and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, we must continue to make the investments in our County that will allow us to build our commercial tax base, so our government becomes less reliant on residential property taxes. We must continue to attract quality economic development to provide our residents with the retailers and amenities they want and deserve, without having to continue to balance our budget on the backs of our residents.

During the 2022 Legislative Session of the General Assembly, we will be supporting legislation to allow targeted grocery stores in our County to sell beer and wine. As we move forward in a post-COVID world, we need to ensure that all of our residents have access to the healthy food options that quality grocery stores provide. Prior to the pandemic, our County already had the most food-insecure areas in the region, with approximately 15 percent of our County being classified as “Low Income, Low Access.” These areas have become larger and more pronounced as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. It is imperative that we ensure our residents have access

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to fresh meat and produce, along with other healthy food options. This legislation will provide a tool that helps increase the already slim profit margins for our grocery stores and will help us attract them into new developments in our underserved communities.

As we bring grocers into these shopping centers, we must also help the owners of the properties modernize the storefronts in a way that helps attract retailers. This is why we will be seeking \$5 million in state funding for our Façade Improvement Program that allows us to provide funds to property owners, that they must then match, to improve the look of their facilities.

As we redevelop areas around the County, we know that housing prices will increase, so we must make sure that we put programs in place to preserve affordable housing to ensure that our residents can stay in their homes long-term, and our seniors can continue to age in place while enjoying all the new and updated amenities in their communities.

To support the County's Equitable Economic Growth vision and achieve the affordable housing preservation and production goals of our Economic Development agenda, our Housing Department recommends investments that will be primarily focused on geographic areas within Prince George's County that are at or near our current or planned transit stations. To accomplish this, we have already launched our Right of First Refusal (ROFR) program that allows the County, working with non-profits, to protect rental households at risk of displacement from their homes. The County recently established a new program with \$15M in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, to be used to help developers acquire the ROFR properties. We will be seeking an additional \$15 million from the state to help fund this program.

The County also recently established a Housing Investment Trust Fund, which we committed \$10 million to expand the creation of new affordable and mixed-income rental and homeownership opportunities in designated Transit Oriented Development (TOD) areas. We will be seeking an additional \$15 million in state funding to continue this program. As the impact of the pandemic continues, the County maintains focus on providing emergency assistance for residents with mortgage and rental arrearages, as well as funding for legal representation in housing litigation due to the pandemic.

### **Healthcare**

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided another example of the health disparities that exist in our County. As we continue to recover from the pandemic, we must do all we can to ensure that our residents have access to equitable and quality healthcare. An immediate need is any available state funding for additional COVID testing, which has become a tremendous challenge due to the rapid spread of the Omicron variant of the virus. We will also be looking to have continued discussions with the Maryland Department of Health regarding the potential expansion of state funding for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) in the community and Community Based Health Centers (CBHCs) in our schools. We will support legislation and increased funding for the expansion of FQHCs and CBHCs in the years to come.

We will also be seeking state funding for a Comprehensive Opportunity Assessment (COA) for our new regional hospital to identify all the areas of concern for the hospital and discover any opportunities to improve the system that the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) has not yet realized. The COA will also: analyze the readmission rates to assess whether poor quality of care is leading to readmissions and exacerbating the capacity issue; review the

payor/provider relationship to identify ways to improve billing, collections and payment outcomes, allowing for more flexibility to perform capital improvements and attract providers, hire critical nursing staff, FTEs and; identify training opportunities to improve patient satisfaction and employee culture. The COA will identify where improvements can be made to help ensure that the hospital operates efficiently and provides all the services our residents need and deserve.

### **Community Investments**

Imperative to the success of every strong community is pride from those who live there. We know that our County has long struggled with trash and litter. As we continue to address this issue, we will be pursuing legislation that will require the state to publish their litter pick-up schedules so we can see when and where they will be in our County and how often they come to our County versus how often they work in other jurisdictions. This will help us ensure that the schedules are equitable, and it will allow us to better coordinate resources with the state so that when their trucks are cleaning state roads, our trucks can be on the County roads that feed into the state roads.

Our community is only as good as our residents, so we must be sure that we invest in people too, especially our seniors. As we have often said, our seniors are the backbone of our communities, but sadly, there are those who choose to prey on them and do them harm. We must do all we can to ensure their safety and that is why we will continue to support legislation to create a centralized, confidential database aimed at ending the physical and mental abuse suffered by seniors at the hands of their caregivers. This is legislation we advocated for and garnered much support for in 2020 and 2021 and we believe that with the support of the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) we will get it across the finish line in 2022.

### **Additional Priorities**

In addition to the above priorities, we will be seeking capital improvement budget requests that will include:

- \$4 million for the remaining state-funded portion of our amphitheater
- \$12.4 million for improvements to the Showplace Arena and Equestrian Center to help us continue to attract and keep shows like the Washington Horse Show
- \$5.5 million for two transportation projects at the intersection of MD 223 and Woodyard Road and the intersection of MD 4 and Suitland Parkway
- Work to ensure that a sports and entertainment facility along the Blue Line Corridor is included in the fund being created for professional sports teams

Additionally, should the University of Maryland Medical System seek funding for a Cancer Center at the Capital Region Medical Center, we will support that request, and we will also support WSSC as they seek state funding to help them recover from pandemic-related financial losses.

**CMA Update**

During the 2021 General Assembly Session, the County Executive, County Council and M-NCPPC sought clarifying amendments to allow the adoption of the County's New Zoning Ordinances (ZOR) and completion of the Countywide Map Amendment (CMA) process. Due to the House and Senate's deliberative process in providing this clarification, we are pleased to advise you that the long-awaited new Zoning Ordinance will go in effect on April 1, 2022. The new ordinance will apply nationwide best practices that streamline the development review process, making it simpler and more user-friendly; allow for greater public input; maximize smart growth economic development; and advance a sustainable environment to achieve a competitive edge in the region.

We thank the Senate and House Delegations, our residents and other stakeholders for their invaluable contributions and commitment to participating in this process. We look forward to the implementation of the County's 21st Century Zoning Ordinance over the next several years, and to the many critical economic development opportunities it will present for our communities and residents.

Over the last three years, we have worked collaboratively to achieve much success on behalf of the residents of Prince George's County, including bringing back necessary funding and resources for our residents, while advocating for the passage of legislation that allows our County to continue to move forward. As a team, we are well positioned to be successful during the 2022 session, and we look forward to our collective efforts that will ensure the growth and prosperity of our County and all those we serve.

Always Prince George's Proud,

Angela D. Alsobrooks  
County Executive

Calvin S. Hawkins, II  
County Council Chair

cc: Governor Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.  
Hon. Bill Ferguson, Senate President  
Hon. Adriene A. Jones, Speaker, House of Delegates  
Members, Prince George's Senate Delegation  
Members, Prince George's House Delegation  
Council Members, Prince George's County Council  
Tara Jackson, Chief Administrative Officer, Office of the County Executive  
Joy Russell, Chief of Staff, Office of the County Executive  
John Erzen, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the County Executive  
Delora Sanchez IfeKauche, Cornerstone  
J. Kenneth Battle, Committee Director, Prince George's County Council