



# PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

## Office of the County Executive

Angela D. Alsobrooks  
County Executive

JAN 16 2020

Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.  
Maryland Governor  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1924

Honorable Bill Ferguson  
Senate President  
State House – H-107  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1924

Honorable Adrienne A. Jones  
Speaker of the House  
State House – H-101  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1924

Re: **Prince George's County – 2020 Maryland General Assembly Legislative Priorities**

Dear Governor Hogan, President Ferguson and Speaker Jones:

The Prince George's County Executive and Prince George's County Council hereby commit to working together with you and the General Assembly to advance our collective goals that will improve the quality of life for all Prince Georgians. These matters include, but are not limited to, working together to find a way to fund the transformative recommendations and vision articulated by the Kirwan Commission, funding the construction and renovation of schools in which we would be proud to educate our children, finding ways to bring smart opportunities for economic development in Prince George's County, and ensuring we do our part to minimize potential negative impacts to our environment.

During the 2020 Legislative Session, public education will be the County's primary focus. The County will continue our partnership working with the State to find reasonable ways to fund the costs of helping the State meet its constitutional obligation to educate our children. To this end, the County is also eager to assist the State in finding better ways to build and maintain the County's public-school facilities.

The County also remains committed to securing funding for transportation and transit projects that will improve our infrastructure and make our roadways safer for our residents and those traveling in and through the County. As you know, there are several State-owned roadways in Prince George's County that require more State aid. The budget passed by the General Assembly last Session contained a special fund appropriation to provide the proper

funding for the necessary changes to the Arena Drive/I-495 interchange.<sup>1</sup> One of the top priorities moving forward is to secure the actual funding for the project. The County also respectfully requests that the State properly fund the needs of Maryland Route 210. This roadway continues to be a safety concern for individuals traveling in and through the County.

Also, from the lens of public safety, Maryland is one of the few states that does not have a registry in place to protect our seniors. County leadership will be working hard this Legislative Session to advance a state-wide bill that will put an end to the abuse that our seniors suffer at the hands of their caregivers and will promote, enhance, and preserve the physical well-being of all Prince Georgians.

The County also has a few other priorities this Session which are enclosed with additional detailed information.

We look forward to working together with the Executive Branch and the General Assembly, under your respective leadership, on these important legislative and budget priorities for Prince George's County.

Respectfully,



Hon. Angela D. Alsobrooks  
Prince George's County Executive



Hon. Todd M. Turner, Chair  
Prince George's County Council

Enclosure

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<sup>1</sup> *Laws of the State of Maryland, Volume IV*, The Department of Legislative Services (2019), pp. 3353-54, <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Pubs/LegisLegal/2019rs-laws-maryland-Vol-004.pdf>.

cc: Prince George's Senate Delegation Members  
Prince George's House Delegation Members  
Prince George's County Council Members  
Robert J. Williams, Council Administrator  
William M. Hunt, Deputy Council Administrator  
Joy Russell, Chief of Staff, Office of the County Executive  
Major Riddick, Chief Administrative Officer, Office of the County Executive  
Rhea Harris, Legislative Director, Office of the County Executive

# PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY LEGISLATIVE AND BUDGET PRIORITIES FOR THE 2020 SESSION OF THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## PUBLIC SCHOOL OPERATING & CONSTRUCTION FUNDING

***PreK-12 Education Funding:*** Funding education is the most profound responsibility of government, so much so that our State Constitution lists it as the State government's top responsibility. The State has fallen behind on these obligations to children in Prince George's County and around the State. We expect this Legislative Session to bring transformative measures and change to Maryland's public school system via the Kirwan Commission's recommendations. However, the funding formula put forward by the Kirwan Commission raises some concerns.

The Kirwan Commission's proposed funding formula will unintentionally widen the State's longstanding structural inequity gap in State education aid by disproportionately requiring jurisdictions with higher concentrations of African American and Hispanic/Latino students with lower wealth per student to contribute substantially more local funding than wealthier jurisdictions. For instance, despite similar Local Education Effort and significantly lower wealth per pupil than Baltimore County and Montgomery County, Prince George's County will have to contribute significantly more local funds between FY 2022 and FY 2030—both annually and cumulatively. If we were to pass the Kirwan bill as is, Prince George's County would have to increase our education spending by over \$500 million over the next ten years, for a total of \$1.5 billion paid out over that ten-year period.

The State must find a way to pay for Kirwan in a responsible manner that ensures that every County can meet their financial portion of it. We must ensure that we develop an equitable, long-term and reasonable way to fund Kirwan that will ensure access to a quality education for every child. The purpose of Kirwan is to bring equity and social justice to schools across the State. Let us be sure to remove all structural, socio-economic, and racial inequities, and ensure that every child, regardless of zip code, will have access to the highest quality of education that will lead to great future successes for our children.

Prince George's County has met and exceeded our financial requirements when it comes to education funding. Over the past nine years (FY 2012-2020), we have exceeded the State's Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirement by an estimated \$134 million. Furthermore, we educate the highest number of students who speak English as a second language and those with disabilities, as well as the second highest number of students who qualify for free and reduced meals (FARMS). Addressing the needs of every student is our top priority. In many respects, we have already initiated the implementation of some of the Kirwan Commission's recommendations, including:

- increased investment in our Pre-K program;
- increased teacher salaries, as we work to recruit and retain the highest quality educators; and
- developed innovative solutions to accelerate school construction and maintenance.

***School Construction Funding:*** Prince George's County ranks among the top three oldest school facilities in the State. Older facilities regularly require extensive repair to critical building features, such as plumbing, roofing, electrical systems, and ventilation. Air quality, noise, classroom size,

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and temperature control are all factors associated with performance outcomes for students and teachers. In 2019, the General Assembly passed a law that authorized the County to enter Public-Private Partnership (P3) agreements to construct or renovate public school facilities in the County. Our goal for the 2020 Legislative Session is to secure a dedicated stream of funding from the State for availability payments to the P3 partners.

## **TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE**

***Transportation and Infrastructure Projects:*** The County remains concerned about State transportation projects that directly impact Prince George's County and those that require State funding for mass transportation, road, and pedestrian safety projects, in addition to funding for local road maintenance.

Our transportation priorities are highlighted in our annual Transportation Priority Letter. These priorities include, but are not limited to:

- ***Vision Zero Prince George's Multimodal Enhancements on State-Maintained Roadways*** – Traffic fatalities and serious injuries are predictable and preventable events. Therefore, it is imperative that we work together to address traffic safety in a much more aggressive and strategic fashion. Projects that are intended to address safety, specifically those designed to reduce pedestrian-related collisions in Prince George's County, are paramount and can be found in several categories of the list including System Preservation and Project Planning. As part of the State's emphasis on context-driven design, it must continue efforts to implement safety features on and along State-maintained roadways; including installing continuous street lighting, crosswalks, sidewalks, and other measures.
- ***Arena Drive Interchange (UMMS)*** – What was initially constructed as an additional entry point to the stadium in the area for high volume events, this interchange has become the front door for the new regional medical center, the rebirth of the area surrounding the hospital, as well as a gateway to the new downtown Largo. This infrastructure needs to be improved to provide true multi-modal mobility and expanded in order to suitably provide access to this vital Transit Oriented Development, and to ensure uninhibited travel to the regional medical center. Funding is essential to complete the Diverging Diamond Interchange to mitigate increased traffic on Arena drive over the beltway.
- ***WMATA Funding*** - Robust funding for the WMATA system is necessary to assure needed capacity and effective transit services throughout Prince George's County, and we applaud the actions taken recently to put WMATA on a sounder financial footing. Both the Metrorail and a soundly funded Metrobus network are essential to the County for addressing mobility needs and providing sustainable alternatives to single occupancy vehicles. The County is very pleased with the regional commitment to dedicated funding for WMATA. However, additional funding is needed for programs like expanding the corridor routes in Prince George's County, to help support Transit Oriented Development around the 15 Stations in the County and enhance transit connectivity between activity

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centers. It is also important for the County to have a strong voice in WMATA governance through Board representation.

- ***US 1, Baltimore Avenue (College Avenue to I-95-495)*** - While some roadway planning and design is moving forward on US 1, this work is crucial in advancing and improving the gateway to the State's flagship university campus. This complicated project is moving forward, but the timeline seems to be moving slowly, albeit a very complicated utility relocation plan. This project includes not only roadway construction, but improved safety, streetscaping for the community, improved transit access, and upgrade of the Cherry Hill Road intersection. The County looks forward to working with the State to dramatically reduce the timeframe for this project so we can move into subsequent phases including I-95/I-495 to Hollywood Road.
- ***MD-210, Indian Head Highway (Palmer Road at Livingston Road West Interchange)*** – Advancing the current work at Kerby Hill Road further South along the MD-210 corridor is of paramount importance to Prince George's County. Moving ahead with this project will benefit the State, Region, and County by improving mobility from Southern Maryland into and through the County.
- ***Southern Maryland Rapid Transit (SMRT) Project*** – MDOT should undertake all necessary steps to complete design, engineering, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and secure a Record of Decision for the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit (SMRT) project connecting the Branch Avenue Metrorail Station in Prince George's County to Waldorf and White Plains in Charles County via fixed guideway transit along the MD5/MD301 corridor.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

***Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT):*** Prince George's County seeks to ensure that residents, businesses, and institutions in Prince George's County are competitive across the State and region. One of our top priorities is to grow our commercial tax base in Prince George's County. With this goal in mind, Prince George's County will advocate for opportunities to bring economic growth and stimulation to our County during this Legislative Session. We will introduce legislation that will modify the law that authorizes the County to enter into PILOT agreements.

Under current law, the County may only enter into one PILOT agreement for an economic development project at a time, which limits the County's ability to attract the significant upfront private investment that is necessary to move these projects forward. Private investors require assurances and certainty from their public partners in these multi-year projects, before they make upfront investments. Therefore, we are proposing changes to address this uncertainty by authorizing the County to enter into multiple PILOT agreements and clarifying that certain PILOT terms apply those PILOT agreements.

***Pimlico:*** The Pimlico deal previously discussed in news outlets throughout the region and by leadership presents an opportunity to ensure that all of the counties impacted by the anticipated

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legislation are winners. More specifically, we are seeking your assistance to bring opportunities for economic development to the County from the State funds that will be used for this project. Your assistance to ensure meaningful inclusion in the Pimlico/Laurel Race Track legislation for Prince George's County is appreciated.

## **HEALTHY COMMUNITIES**

***Elder Abuse Registry:*** Prince George's County has one of the fastest growing senior populations in the region, and it is vitally important that we protect our seniors from those who wish to prey on them or bring them harm. Currently, Maryland is in the minority of states that does not have a centralized and confidential elder abuse registry. During the 2020 Legislative Session, we will be supporting legislation to create a centralized, confidential database that is aimed at putting an end to the physical and financial abuse suffered by some seniors at the hands of their caregivers. This legislation is extremely important and will benefit countless members of our County.

***Flavored Vaping Ban:*** E-cigarette marketing is strategically aimed at attracting new, younger customers to nicotine use and this problem carries deadly outcomes. There is strong research connecting flavored liquid tobacco to increased risk of heart disease. In order to protect future generations from the harmful effects of these toxic chemicals, we will support a ban on flavored vaping products.

## **COUNTY BEAUTIFICATION**

County beautification is an ongoing priority for Prince George's County. We will be supporting legislative efforts that minimize consumer access to single-use items, such as plastic bags, and other efforts to educate our community on the importance of reducing their use of non-recyclable items. This will be part of our overall county beautification strategy to keep our environment clean and healthy for generations to come.