

MARYLAND'S FIRST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

THE NEW PLAN

Randi White's Plan for MD-01



RANDI WHITE

DEMOCRAT FOR CONGRESS

All of Us for All of Us

Dear Home Team,

When I was a kid, my Mom-Mom's kitchen table was the place people came when something was wrong. They sat there for hours and laid out their problems. By the time they left, they had a plan.

I constantly think about what happened at her kitchen table.

Right now in this country, things are broken. Federal workers at Aberdeen Proving Ground are being told they can be fired for political loyalty. Black voters around the nation are worried all their rights will be stripped. The retiree who paid into Social Security their whole working life is watching pension benefits get cut by a one-vote bill in Congress, with our own representative voting Present so the cuts could pass. Mothers in Somerset County are driving up to an hour to give birth, because the hospitals here keep closing. The Bay is sick. Our schools are starving. The polluters are profiting.

You feel it, right? Every kitchen table I sit at, somebody is telling me this story.

What you are holding is what I have been writing for the last year. It is a plan. I'm calling it The New Plan because we've done this before in this country. Eighty years ago, when the country was on its knees from the Great Depression, Franklin Roosevelt and the people around him built a New Deal that lifted a generation into the middle class.

Shirley Chisholm said, "if they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair." It's in her honor that I say, I no longer want room at that table. We're flipping it over to build a brand new one. This plan is how we do it.

There are fights in this binder that one member of Congress cannot win alone. There are bills the Senate will not pass without changes that have not happened yet. There is a Supreme Court that is not on our side. But, I will fight for you. I will fight for us. I will always let you know in what way, with what allies, against what blockers. Where the plan is blocked, I will say so. With The New Plan, you can hold me accountable.

This is your plan, too. Pull up a chair. We can do this.

All of us. For all of us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Randi White', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

RANDI WHITE

THE NEW PLAN

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HONOR THE DEAL WE MADE

This country is supposed to run on trust. The worker shows up, and they trust the wages show up. The veteran signs the contract, and they trust the country will honor it. The retiree pays in their whole life, and they trust the check arrives. Right now, that trust is being broken. This part of the plan is about restoring it.

I N T H I S T H E M E

1.1 **Bargaining Rights and the Loyalty Test**

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BRIEF 1.1

Bargaining Rights and the Loyalty Test

WHAT'S HAPPENING

If you work at Aberdeen Proving Ground, or Perry Point VA, or any federal office in MD-01, you probably have a union contract. That contract is why you have grievance rights, predictable schedules, fair pay scales, and a way to fight back if a supervisor treats you wrong. Roughly 950,000 federal workers across the country have these protections.

In April 2025, the President signed an executive order tearing the contracts up. Executive Order 14251 declared most federal agencies "national security agencies." That designation, under existing law, exempts an agency from collective bargaining requirements. The actual purpose, according to the federal judge who later ruled on it, was retaliating against the unions for opposing the President.

Federal employee unions sued. Six of them in the lead case, representing roughly 800,000 workers covered by the executive order: AFGE, AFSCME, NAGE-SEIU, NFFE-IAM, NNU, and SEIU.

In June 2025, a federal judge in California issued a preliminary injunction. He found the executive order was likely unconstitutional retaliation under the First Amendment. The contracts were ordered restored. In February 2026, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals lifted that injunction, clearing the path for agencies to keep stripping bargaining rights while the underlying case continues at trial.

That ruling is part of why the agencies have kept cheating.

The VA Secretary, in March 2026, secretly re-terminated the AFGE master contract that covers 320,000 VA employees. He did it the night before a court hearing where he was supposed to prove to a federal judge in Rhode Island that he had restored the contract. The judge, Melissa DuBose, found out the next morning when she walked into court. She used the words "blatant disrespect for not just this court's order, but for the rule of law." She started the process to hold the VA in contempt. The VA backed down and put the contract back on paper. In practice, court filings since show the VA is still ignoring the contract day-to-day.

That is just one agency. The Department of Homeland Security, the Treasury, the Department of Energy, and the IRS have all been doing some version of the same thing.

There is a separate fight running in parallel called Schedule F. That is the proposal to reclassify career federal workers, the people who run the day-to-day work of the country, into a status with weaker civil service protections. Once reclassified, they can be fired for what the administration calls "political disloyalty." Four federal lawsuits are trying to stop it. One of them, PEER v. Trump, is in U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland.

Andy Harris voted against the bill that would have ended this. H.R. 2550, the Protect America's Workforce Act, would have nullified the executive order and restored collective bargaining rights by statute. The bill passed the House 231 to 195 on December 11, 2025, with twenty Republicans crossing over. Andy Harris voted Nay.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

NFFE Local 178 and Local 476 are at Aberdeen Proving Ground. Their members are your neighbors in Bel Air, Aberdeen, Edgewood, and Joppatowne. Local 178 represents Army Contracting Command employees. Local 476 represents the engineers and technical staff at CECOM and the C5ISR Center.

AFGE Local 331 represents Perry Point VA Medical Center employees in Cecil County. These are the nurses, social workers, claims processors, and medical technicians who care for veterans.

If the executive orders stand and the legislation does not pass, your neighbor at Aberdeen can be reassigned, demoted, or fired without the protections that have been federal law for decades. If Schedule F is implemented, the same neighbor can be fired for refusing a political loyalty test.

Maryland lost roughly 25,000 federal jobs in 2025, the most of any state. About 10,300 were lost in October and November alone, during the 43-day government shutdown that Andy Harris and the Freedom Caucus helped force. MD-01 took a major share of those losses. Harford County alone has 43 federal workers per 1,000 residents, the highest concentration outside the DC suburbs.

MY TAKE

Federal workers should not lose their contracts because the President is angry at their unions. Career civil servants should not be fired for refusing political loyalty tests. These are baseline expectations of how a functioning government treats the people who run it.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Cosponsor the Protect America's Workforce Act (H.R. 2550). The bill already passed the House. The work is on the Senate path, partnering with Senators Van Hollen and Alsobrooks and the bipartisan coalition led by Representatives Golden and Fitzpatrick.

Cosponsor the Saving the Civil Service Act (H.R. 492). This is the Schedule F fix. It is currently stuck in the House Oversight Committee while the chair refuses to schedule a markup. The work is public pressure on the chair, including a public letter and floor statements, until it moves.

Vote yes on every roll call tied to these bills, including procedural votes. No "Present" votes on labor protections.

Join the Federal Workforce Caucus.

In the District

A dedicated caseworker for federal workforce issues, in the district office. RIF appeals (federal layoff appeals), contract grievances, retirement disputes. Federal workers in MD-01 should not have to navigate this alone.

Site visits to NFFE Locals 178 and 476 at Aberdeen, AFGE Local 331 at Perry Point, and the Eastern Shore VA clinics at Cambridge and Pocomoke.

An MD-01 Federal Workforce Summit, hosted at Aberdeen. The summit brings NFFE, AFGE, NTEU, IFPTE, and SEIU locals into one room with the district office staff. The point is to keep the line of communication open, not to make a speech.

Through Oversight

Public hearings on contract terminations at the VA, DHS, OPM, and Treasury. Named officials, named breaches. The point is to put the Cabinet officials who broke the law on the record about how they did it.

Amicus briefs in the active Schedule F litigation, including PEER v. Trump in the District of Maryland.

Public letters to OPM and individual Cabinet departments demanding compliance with court orders.

THE HONEST PART

H.R. 2550 cannot pass the Senate without filibuster reform or a 60-vote bipartisan coalition. Neither is realistic in the current Senate. Until the Senate composition changes, the work is amendments, oversight, and public pressure to keep the issue alive. Pretending otherwise would be a lie.

H.R. 492 cannot leave the House Oversight Committee while the current chair refuses to schedule it. The work is external pressure and limiting damage from executive action.

The four Schedule F lawsuits may resolve before or after the legislation. Win or lose in court, the legislative fix is still needed. A court ruling can be reversed by the next administration. A statute cannot.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- H.R. 2550, Protect America's Workforce Act. Sponsored by Rep. Jared Golden (D-ME) and Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA). House passed 231-195 on December 11, 2025 (Roll Call 332). **Andy Harris voted Nay.** Senate companion: S. 2837 (Sen. Murkowski cosponsoring). congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/2550
- H.R. 492, Saving the Civil Service Act. Sponsored by Rep. Connolly (D-VA), Rep. Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Rep. Mfume (D-MD), Rep. Bacon (R-NE). Stuck in House Oversight Committee. congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/492

COURT CASES

- AFGE et al. v. Trump (3:25-cv-03698, N.D. Cal.). EO 14251 challenge. Preliminary injunction granted June 24, 2025. 9th Circuit lifted the injunction in February 2026. Trial proceeding.
- AFGE v. VA (1:25-cv-00583, D.R.I.). Reinstatement of the master collective bargaining agreement. Preliminary injunction granted March 13, 2026. VA secretly re-terminated the contract March 26, 2026. Judge Melissa DuBose threatened contempt March 27, 2026.
- PEER v. Trump (8:25-cv-00260, D. Md.). Schedule F challenge in Maryland federal court.
- NTEU v. Trump (1:25-cv-00170, D.D.C.). Schedule F challenge.

SOURCES

- House Clerk vote tally, Roll Call 332, 119th Congress: clerk.house.gov/Votes/2025332
- Government Executive, "Blatant disrespect': Judge contemplates contempt proceedings after VA re-terminated union contract" (March 2026)
- Federal News Network, "VA re-terminates AFGE contract for 300K employees, despite court order to restore it"
- AFGE press release, contempt warning
- Government Executive, "House passes bill nullifying Trump's anti-union EOs" (December 2025)
- Maryland Governor's Office, federal job loss totals (2025)

PARTNERS

NFFE National and Locals 178 (Army Contracting Command, Aberdeen) and 476 (CECOM/C5ISR, Aberdeen). AFGE District 14 and Local 331 (Perry Point VA). NTEU. AFL-CIO Maryland State and DC. Federal Workers Alliance. Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER).

BRIEF 1.2

The Triple Hit: Pay, Health, Retirement

WHAT'S HAPPENING

A federal employee right now is fighting on three fronts: pay, health, and retirement. Their paycheck has been frozen, their health insurance premiums have jumped double digits two years running, and the retirement benefit they were promised was almost cut last spring by a one-vote House bill that their own congressman let pass.

The pay freeze.

The President's FY27 budget proposed a zero percent civilian pay raise. The military got 7%. The House appropriations bill omitted any civilian pay raise language entirely. If it passes as-is, the freeze becomes statute.

Health benefits.

Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) premiums jumped 12.3% on average for 2026, on top of 13.5% for 2025. Back-to-back double-digit hikes. For retirees, who pay post-tax (not pre-tax like active employees), the bite is worse. Some plans saw enrollee-share increases up to 99%. OPM also terminated coverage for gender-affirming care for 2026. And it is pushing further benefit erosion through "well care" cost-cutting, including ending cash incentives for childhood vaccines.

Retirement.

The House Oversight Committee's first draft of the May 2025 reconciliation bill (H.R. 1) included \$50.9 billion in cuts to federal-postal retirement over ten years. Three of the biggest pieces (raising Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) contributions from 0.8% to 4.4%, switching the pension formula from high-3 to high-5, and an at-will employment coercion provision for new federal hires) were stripped from the bill before it reached the House floor, after pressure from federal employee unions and advocacy groups.

What was left in the version that came up for a House vote: elimination of the FERS supplement (the bridge payment from retirement age to Social Security eligibility at 62) for new federal retirees starting January 2028. CBO scored the surviving cut at \$10 billion over ten years.

H.R. 1 passed the House by one vote: 215 to 214. Andy Harris voted Present. He was the only member of the House to do so. His own social media post said he voted Present "to move the bill along."

The Senate stripped the FERS supplement provision before the bill became law on July 4, 2025. Andy Harris was not part of defeating those cuts. The same proposals are expected to return in the next reconciliation cycle.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

A GS-12 engineer at Aberdeen Proving Ground takes home roughly \$90,000 a year before taxes. Here is what the federal worker squeeze looks like at their kitchen table right now.

- The FY27 pay freeze costs them roughly \$2,500 to \$3,500 in lost cost-of-living raise.
- The FEHB premium increase costs them another \$30 to \$50 per month per household, every month.

Combined: roughly \$3,000 to \$4,000 a year out of pocket for the same job and the same family budget.

That is what is happening now. What almost happened: the full \$50.9 billion gut of federal retirement that the House Oversight Committee originally drafted. If the original bill had passed, the same GS-12 engineer would have been out roughly \$6,000 to \$9,000 a year, plus a worse retirement waiting at the end. Andy Harris's Present vote on the stripped-down version was what got the bill across the House by a single vote, and the Senate then stripped the remaining FERS supplement cut before final passage. The same proposals are expected to return in the next reconciliation cycle.

For federal retirees on the Eastern Shore (Salisbury, Cambridge, Easton, all retirement-destination towns), the FEHB premium hike is a direct cut to a fixed income. A retiree paying \$300 a month for FEHB now pays \$337. That is \$444 a year, gone.

For the GS-7 in Cecil County who was hoping to retire at 57 under the FERS supplement: that bridge payment was almost taken away. The \$1,000 to \$2,000 a month cushion was set to evaporate for new retirees starting in 2028 if H.R. 1 had become law as the House passed it. The Senate stripped the cut. The proposal will return.

This is happening at every kitchen table in MD-01 where someone works for the federal government.

MY TAKE

The country signed a deal with federal workers. The deal said: we trust you to do the work, and you trust us to make the pay, the health insurance, and the retirement worth your time. Two of those three benefits are eroding right now. The third was nearly cut in May 2025 by a one-vote House bill that Andy Harris had the chance to stop with a single Nay vote and instead voted Present. The Senate removed the cut before final passage, and the same proposals are expected to return in the next reconciliation cycle.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Cosponsor any bill restoring the FERS supplement, reversing the contribution hike, and protecting the high-3 pension formula. House Democrats introduced a 4.1% federal pay raise for FY27 (3.1% base, 1.0% locality) in February 2026. Cosponsor that.

Vote yes on every roll call to restore federal retirement, pay, and benefits. Procedural votes count. No "Present" votes.

Demand cost-of-living parity. Civilian federal workers should not be given a zero raise in years when the military gets 7%, or in years when Congress votes itself a raise.

Use the appropriations process to block OPM's "well care" cuts, the gender-affirming care termination, and the proposed claims-data privacy rollback.

In the District

The federal workforce caseworker in the district office (the same one named in Brief 1.1) handles retirement disputes, FEHB appeals, and pay-related grievances. Listening sessions at Aberdeen, Perry Point, and the Eastern Shore VA clinics specifically about the kitchen-table math: pay, health, and retirement.

A specific outreach push to federal retirees on the Eastern Shore. They are the most isolated and most affected by FEHB premium hikes. A dedicated district office contact for retiree benefit issues.

Through Oversight

Public hearings on OPM's FEHB rulemaking, including the gender-affirming care termination and the claims-data privacy rollback. Get the OPM Director on the record about who benefits and who pays.

Public letters to the Speaker and the Appropriations chair demanding a civilian pay raise in the FY27 spending bill.

Committee inquiry into the at-will employment coercion provision. Who designed it. Who pushed for it. Whose interest does it serve.

THE HONEST PART

A pay raise for federal workers is not on this Congress's priority list. The House majority will not bring it up. The work is keeping the issue in the news, making sure constituents know who blocked it, and being ready when the political math changes.

The FERS supplement cut almost became law in 2025. The Senate stripped it from H.R. 1 before final passage, which is the only reason the cut is not in effect right now. The proposals are expected to return in the next reconciliation cycle, including the FERS contribution hike, the high-5 pension switch, and the at-will employment coercion provision that were stripped before the May House floor vote. The work is making sure they do not pass next time, and protecting the workers already in the system.

The FEHB premium hikes are set by carrier negotiations, not by Congress directly. The federal government's share is what Congress controls. Restoring it to keep premiums affordable is a budget fight, not a single bill.

Pretending any of this is fixable in two years would be dishonest. What we can do is make sure the federal workers in MD-01 know who is fighting for them and who is letting it happen.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- H.R. 1, One Big Beautiful Bill Act (May 2025 reconciliation). Roll Call 145, May 22, 2025. Passed 215-214-1. **Andy Harris voted Present**, the only member of the House to do so.
- H.R. 493, FAIR Act. 4.3% federal employee pay raise for 2026 (FY26). Sponsor: Rep. Connolly (D-VA). Stalled in committee.
- House Democratic FY27 pay raise legislation, introduced February 2026. 4.1% raise (3.1% base, 1.0% locality). No movement in GOP-controlled House.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

- OPM call letter to FEHB carriers, March 31, 2026. Directs MAHA-style cost cuts. Ends gender-affirming care coverage for 2026 (full elimination in 2027).
- OPM proposed Reduction in Force rule, March 5, 2026 (Federal Register Doc 2026-04377). Replaces seniority-based retention with performance-based retention.
- USPS suspension of FERS employer contributions, April 9, 2026.

SOURCES

- House Clerk vote tally, Roll Call 145: clerk.house.gov/Votes/2025145
- CBO Publication 61381, "Reconciliation Recommendations of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform"
- NARFE, "Federal Workforce Provisions Dropped from H.R. 1 Prior to Senate Passage" (July 1, 2025)
- Federal News Network, "House-passed reconciliation bill includes more changes to proposed federal benefits cuts" (May 2025)
- NFFE press release, "Trump Administration Proposes Pay Freeze for Federal Workforce in FY 2027 Budget"
- Government Executive, "OPM to FEHB carriers: Cut costs, MAHA style" (April 2026)
- Talbot Spy, "Andy Harris stands alone as 'Present' for vote on budget reconciliation bill"
- Baltimore Sun, "Why Maryland Rep. Andy Harris voted 'present' on Trump's bill"

PARTNERS

NFFE National and Locals 178, 476 (Aberdeen). AFGE District 14 and Local 331 (Perry Point). NTEU. NARFE (National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association). AFL-CIO Maryland.

BRIEF 1.3

The Promise We Made to Veterans

WHAT'S HAPPENING

When you sign up to defend this country, the deal is straightforward: you serve, and when you come home the country takes care of you. That deal is breaking down right now in three specific places.

Toxic exposure care.

The PACT Act passed in 2022. It authorized \$797 billion over ten years to give burn pit veterans, Agent Orange veterans, and Gulf War veterans the healthcare they earned. Andy Harris voted Nay twice. He voted against the original House version (HR 3967, Roll Call 57, March 3, 2022, passed 256-174), and he voted against the final version that became law (S. 3373, Roll Call 309, July 13, 2022, passed 342-88). On the final passage vote, dozens of House Republicans flipped to Yea after public pressure from veterans groups. Andy Harris held his Nay.

The PACT Act is now being administratively gutted. The VA cut more than 28,000 employees in 2025 alone, including 1,800 claims processors. In December 2025, the VA announced 25,000 more cuts coming. Mental health wait times in Maryland exceeded 40 days in early 2026. A bill that took a decade to pass is being undone by understaffing.

Combat-injured retirees.

The Major Richard Star Act would let about 50,000 combat-injured retirees collect both their military retirement pay and their VA disability rating. Right now, dollar-for-dollar offset rules cancel one against the other. The bill has 317 House cosponsors, more than enough to pass, and 78 Senate cosponsors, well over the 60 needed for cloture (the Senate vote that ends debate). It still has not passed. Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS), chair of Senate Armed Services, personally objected to unanimous consent twice (October 8, 2025 and March 3, 2026). He called the bill "double dipping."

Suicide prevention.

Twenty-two veterans die by suicide every day. Four bills aimed at this crisis are stalled in committee. The Parker Gordon Fox suicide prevention program needs reauthorization. The Hannon Mental Health Care Improvement Act needs renewal. The transition assistance bill named for two veterans lost to suicide is sitting on a chair's desk. None of them are moving.

The pattern across all three is the same. Each bill exists with bipartisan support. The block is a small number of leadership decisions: committee chairs, Senate objectors, and appropriators who refuse to staff what they wrote into law.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

There are roughly 50,000 to 60,000 veterans in MD-01. Harford County alone has 18,175 veterans, 9% of the population. Post-9/11 veterans in Harford: 5,841. Vietnam veterans: 4,960. Korea: 729. World War II: 116.

The Star Act would directly affect post-9/11 veterans in Harford and across MD-01 if any of them retired with combat injuries. Right now, the offset is taking money out of their retirement every month.

The PACT Act is the law that lets the Vietnam veteran in Talbot County get an Agent Orange claim processed. The 1,800 claims processors cut in 2025 are why that claim is now sitting for nine months.

The 40-day mental health wait time at Maryland VA facilities is what the Crisfield veteran hits when he calls the Pocomoke City clinic for help.

These are not abstract numbers. Every one of them maps to a household in this district.

MY TAKE

A veteran signed a contract with the country. The country has to honor it. That obligation is the bare minimum a veteran can expect from the federal government, regardless of who controls Congress.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Cosponsor the Major Richard Star Act and push to attach the language to the next National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the annual must-pass defense bill that is usually how blocked veterans bills move.

Vote yes on full PACT Act funding in every appropriations cycle. Vote no on any cut to VA medical staffing.

Cosponsor the Parker Gordon Fox reauthorization (H.R. 1969), the Veteran Overmedication and Suicide Prevention Act (H.R. 136), the Daniel J. Harvey Jr. and Adam Lambert Servicemember Transition Act (H.R. 2878), and the Hannon Mental Health Care Improvement Act reauthorization (S. 793).

Join the House Veterans Affairs Committee if assigned. Otherwise, work through the bipartisan Veterans Caucus.

Use floor time to read names. Specifically, names of MD-01 veterans waiting on PACT Act claims and combat-injured veterans being shorted by the Star Act offset.

In the District

A district office case manager dedicated to VA claims, separate from the federal workforce caseworker. Veterans should not have to wait on hold. The case manager works with veterans service organizations (American Legion, VFW, Vietnam Veterans of America) to triage stuck claims.

Veterans town halls, rotating across MD-01 counties. Cecil, Harford, Talbot, Dorchester, Worcester, and the rest. Open format. The point is to listen.

A specific outreach to post-9/11 veterans about the Star Act offset. Many do not know they are being shorted because the offset is buried in their retirement statements.

Through Oversight

Demand committee hearings on VA staffing cuts and PACT Act implementation. Get the VA Secretary on the record about why claims processors are being cut while claims are stacking up.

Public letter to Senate Armed Services Chair Wicker demanding the Star Act move to the floor. Read the names of Wicker-blocked veterans into the Congressional Record.

Annual report from the district office on PACT Act claim wait times in MD-01. Public. Posted online.

THE HONEST PART

The Star Act has the votes. It is being blocked by a single Senate chair. The most realistic path is attaching it to the next NDAA. That is one vote per year. We cosponsor every standalone version, push for the NDAA amendment every cycle, and make Wicker's name synonymous with the block.

The PACT Act funding cuts are administrative, not legislative. They happen at the VA Secretary's level and through OPM staffing decisions. Congressional pushback is hearings, oversight, and appropriations leverage. Not a single bill.

The four suicide prevention bills are bipartisan and uncontroversial on substance. The block is committee priorities, not opposition. The work is keeping pressure on the chair and looking for a vehicle (often an end-of-year omnibus or the NDAA) to ride them through.

Pretending we can reverse 28,000 VA staff cuts with one piece of legislation would be dishonest. The fix is a coalition Congress and an administration that wants to staff the VA.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- H.R. 2102, Major Richard Star Act. Sponsors: Rep. Bilirakis (R-FL), Sens. Blumenthal (D-CT), Crapo (R-ID), Warren (D-MA). 317 House cosponsors, 78 Senate cosponsors. Blocked by Sen. Wicker (R-MS) on unanimous consent twice (October 8, 2025 and March 3, 2026).
- HR 3967, PACT Act (House first-passage version). Roll Call 57, March 3, 2022. Passed 256-174. **Andy Harris voted Nay.**
- S. 3373, PACT Act (Senate-amended final-passage version, signed into law). House Roll Call 309, July 13, 2022. Passed 342-88. **Andy Harris voted Nay.**
- H.R. 1969, No Wrong Door for Veterans Act (Parker Gordon Fox program reauthorization).
- H.R. 136, Veteran Overmedication and Suicide Prevention Act.
- H.R. 2878, Daniel J. Harvey Jr. and Adam Lambert Servicemember Transition Act.
- S. 793, Hannon Mental Health Care Improvement Act reauthorization.

SOURCES

- Bilirakis press release on Star Act reintroduction
- MOAA Star Act SITREP
- Senate Veterans Affairs Committee on Wicker block
- VA workforce reduction data, December 2025 VA announcement

- Maryland mental health wait time data, MD VA Health Care System reporting (early 2026)
- Veterans demographics by Maryland county

PARTNERS

American Legion (Posts 70, 77, and others across MD-01). VFW (posts across MD-01). Vietnam Veterans of America. Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families.

BRIEF 1.4

A VA That Actually Works on the Eastern Shore

WHAT'S HAPPENING

The federal VA system that takes care of veterans on the Eastern Shore is too thin and too far away. The VA Maryland Health Care System runs eight locations. Perry Point VA Medical Center sits at the western edge of Cecil County and serves as the regional hospital. Outside of Perry Point, only two federal VA outpatient clinics operate east of the Bay: Cambridge VA Outpatient Clinic in Dorchester County and Pocomoke City VA Clinic in Worcester County. Two clinics for an area that runs from Kent down to Somerset.

Easton has a state Department of Veterans Affairs office staffed by a state benefits specialist, but no federal VA outpatient clinic. Veterans in Talbot, Queen Anne's, Caroline, and Kent counties drive to Cambridge, drive to Pocomoke, or drive to Baltimore. For aging veterans, a 90-minute drive becomes a denial of care.

The mid-Shore counties have been asking for an expanded federal VA presence for years. Talbot County leadership and veterans service organizations have been pushing for it. The decisions get made at the regional VISN (Veterans Integrated Services Network) level. A full VA hospital in Easton is not realistic in the near term, but a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic in or near Easton with primary care, mental health, women's veterans care, and tele-specialty access is winnable through the next clinic siting cycle.

The other half of this fight is staffing what we already have. The VA cut more than 28,000 employees in 2025 alone (Brief 1.3 covers the national picture). On the Eastern Shore, that meant longer waits at Cambridge, longer waits at Pocomoke, and longer drives to Baltimore for anything specialized.

There is also a veteran homelessness piece. The HUD-VASH program (Housing and Urban Development plus VA Supportive Housing) provides housing vouchers paired with VA case management for homeless veterans. The program works when staffed and funded. In MD-01, the demand outstrips the supply.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

Talbot, Queen Anne's, Caroline, and Kent counties.

Four counties without a federal VA outpatient clinic in driving distance. A Vietnam veteran in Easton who needs specialty cardiology drives to Baltimore. A post-9/11 veteran in Centreville who needs PTSD treatment drives to Cambridge or Pocomoke and usually waits 40+ days for the appointment.

Cecil County.

Perry Point VA Medical Center is the closest full federal VA hospital to MD-01. AFGE Local 331 represents the workers there. Brief 1.1 covers the bargaining rights fight at Perry Point. This brief covers the staffing one.

Dorchester County.

Cambridge VA Outpatient Clinic. The lifeline for lower-Shore veterans. Capacity is a chronic problem.

Worcester County.

Pocomoke City VA Clinic. The other lifeline. Same problem, smaller staff.

Veteran homelessness.

Hard to count precisely (HUD-VASH does not publish county-level breakdowns), but the population at risk in MD-01 is real. A homeless veteran in Salisbury, Cambridge, or Bel Air needs both housing and the VA case management to use it.

MY TAKE

A 90-minute drive for a doctor's appointment functions as a barrier rather than as access to care. Veterans on the Eastern Shore earned better than this.

OUR PLAN***In Congress***

Lead the federal advocacy for a new Community-Based Outpatient Clinic in Talbot County. Work with VA Maryland Health Care System leadership, VISN 5 leadership, and the House Veterans Affairs Committee to make the case in the next clinic siting cycle. The justification is documented underservice across the mid-Shore, an aging veteran population, and unsustainable travel times.

Push for specialty service expansion at Cambridge and Pocomoke. Even before a new clinic opens, the existing clinics can offer more on-site women's veterans care, dental, and tele-mental health. Those expansions are budgetable now.

Vote against any VA staffing reduction, hiring freeze, or contracting-out scheme. The PACT Act expanded VA enrollment significantly. Staffing has to keep up.

Cosponsor and push expansion of HUD-VASH funding and VA case management capacity. Veteran homelessness ends with housing plus case management. Both have to be funded.

In the District

A district office liaison for VA care issues, working alongside the case manager named in Brief 1.3. The liaison's specific job is local: clinic capacity, appointment wait times, specialty referrals, and the Easton CBOC fight specifically.

Site visits to Cambridge VA, Pocomoke VA, and Perry Point VA. Listening sessions with the staff, the veterans service organizations, and the patient population.

Coordination with Maryland's Commitment to Veterans (MCV) and the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families on housing, employment, and benefits services.

A specific outreach to homeless veterans services in Salisbury, Cambridge, and Bel Air. Working with local nonprofits to identify gaps in HUD-VASH coverage and case management.

Through Oversight

Annual public report on VA wait times and staffing levels at Cambridge, Pocomoke, and Perry Point. Posted online. Wait times by specialty, by month.

Letter to the VA Secretary at the start of each appropriations cycle requesting funding allocations for Eastern Shore VA capacity expansion.

Press for a hearing on VA staffing impacts in rural and small-town communities. The Eastern Shore is the use case.

THE HONEST PART

A new Community-Based Outpatient Clinic at Easton is a multi-year fight. The VA's clinic siting cycles do not turn quickly. The work in the first term is making the case, getting on the list, and not letting the request die when leadership turns over.

VA staffing levels are determined by the Cabinet department, not directly by Congress. Congressional pushback is appropriations, oversight, and public pressure. Reversing the 28,000 cuts already made requires a different administration.

HUD-VASH funding is set in the annual HUD-VA budget. Expanding it is a budget fight, not a single bill. The work is making sure MD-01's piece of the pie is fought for.

Winning the Easton CBOC and defending Perry Point's union and the Cambridge and Pocomoke staffing levels are achievable from this seat. Rebuilding the entire VA system from a single congressional district is not achievable from one seat, and pretending it is would be dishonest. The work is staking out the achievable fights and pushing them through.

RECEIPTS

TOOLS AND AUTHORITIES

- VA appropriations process. VA MISSION Act oversight. PACT Act implementation. House Veterans Affairs Committee. VA Maryland Health Care System / VISN 5.

ANDY HARRIS'S RECORD ON VETERANS FUNDING

- Voted Nay on the PACT Act on both House passage votes: HR 3967 (Roll Call 57, March 3, 2022) and S. 3373 final passage (Roll Call 309, July 13, 2022). See Brief 1.3 for full receipts.
- As Freedom Caucus chair, helped force the 43-day government shutdown of October-November 2025 that contributed to 10,300 federal job losses in Maryland during that two-month window.

SOURCES

- VA Maryland Health Care System facility list: va.gov/maryland-health-care/locations
- HUD-VASH program: hudexchange.info/programs/hud-vash
- Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families: veterans.maryland.gov
- Maryland's Commitment to Veterans (MCV): veterans.maryland.gov/maryland-commitment-to-veterans-mcv

- Talbot County Veterans Commission advocacy correspondence on Easton CBOC.

PARTNERS

Talbot County Veterans Commission. American Legion Posts 70, 77, and others across MD-01. VFW posts across MD-01. Maryland's Commitment to Veterans (MCV). National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families.

BRIEF 1.5

The Right to Organize

WHAT'S HAPPENING

The right to organize is the workers' side of the deal. You bring your labor and your employer brings the wage. When the wage is unfair, the conditions are unsafe, or the schedule is impossible, organizing is the legal mechanism for talking to your coworkers and bargaining together.

Right now, the right to organize is under attack on three fronts.

Private-sector organizing.

The PRO Act (Protecting the Right to Organize Act, H.R. 20) is the major bill on private-sector union rights. It strengthens the National Labor Relations Act in real ways. Real penalties for employers who retaliate against union organizers. A ban on state right-to-work laws (which weaken unions by letting workers benefit from union contracts without paying dues). Expanded worker classification (cracks down on misclassifying employees as contractors). Permits secondary boycotts (unions can strike at suppliers, not just the employer). Bans permanent striker replacements.

The PRO Act has been reintroduced in the 119th Congress. It has 47 Senate Democratic cosponsors but no path to 60. House floor action: none.

Public-sector organizing.

The Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act (H.R. 2736) sets a federal floor for collective bargaining rights for public-sector workers (federal, state, and local). Right now, public-sector bargaining is a state-by-state patchwork. Some states ban most public worker unions outright. The bill creates federal minimum standards.

H.R. 2736 was referred to committee in April 2025. No markup scheduled.

Federal-sector organizing.

Brief 1.1 covers this in detail. The Protect America's Workforce Act (H.R. 2550) restores federal collective bargaining rights stripped by EO 14251. Andy Harris voted Nay on H.R. 2550.

Across all three, the pattern is the same: the legislation exists, the need is real, and the block is leadership.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

Walk through MD-01 and the right-to-organize fight is not abstract.

Aberdeen Proving Ground (Harford County).

Federal workers. Brief 1.1.

Perdue Farms (Salisbury, Wicomico County).

Line workers, mostly Black and Latino, mostly women. Among the highest workplace injury rates in American food production. The largest single employer on the Lower Shore. UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers) has organized some Perdue plants and not others.

The watermen on the Bay (Tilghman, Smith Island, Crisfield, Rock Hall, others).

Independent contractors by classification, but the economic relationships often look more like employer-employee. Many would benefit from sectoral bargaining the PRO Act would enable.

Retail and service workers across MD-01.

Walmart in Salisbury. Amazon distribution centers in Cecil County. Restaurants and small businesses in every town. Most have no union representation. The PRO Act is what would change that.

Building trades.

IBEW, Carpenters, Operating Engineers, Plumbers and Pipefitters. Strong in the Aberdeen and Edgewood corridors and in the Baltimore County portion of the district. Active partners.

If the PRO Act passed, the Perdue worker who has been organizing quietly for two years could publicly do it without fear of being fired. If H.R. 2736 passed, the Maryland teacher whose union rights are already protected by state law would have a federal backstop.

MY TAKE

If you want to be paid fairly, the most effective tool you have is your coworkers. That is the lesson of every American labor fight, from the Pullman strike to the West Virginia teachers strike. The right to organize is a basic American freedom that is being chipped away right now.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Cosponsor the PRO Act (H.R. 20).

Cosponsor the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act (H.R. 2736).

Vote yes on every roll call related to private-sector and public-sector organizing rights, including procedural votes.

Push for committee markup of H.R. 2736 and floor action on H.R. 20.

Show up on picket lines. When workers in MD-01 strike for fair wages and safe conditions, they should see their congresswoman standing with them. Every time.

In the District

A district office liaison for labor issues, working with AFL-CIO Maryland State and DC, the affiliated international unions, and independent worker organizations. The liaison fields organizing complaints, NLRB filings, retaliation issues, and contract negotiations.

An MD-01 Labor Summit, separate from the Federal Workforce Summit (Brief 1.1). The Labor Summit convenes private-sector locals, building trades, public-sector locals, and worker centers. The point is to connect organizers across sectors and identify common fights.

Specific outreach to Perdue line workers. The largest concentration of unorganized blue-collar workers in MD-01 is in their plants. They deserve a member of Congress who will publicly stand with them when they organize.

Through Oversight

Public letters to NLRB regional offices on cases of retaliation against organizers in MD-01.

Floor speeches naming employers who illegally fire organizers. Public, on the record, by name.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General on misclassification cases (workers wrongly classified as contractors to avoid labor protections).

THE HONEST PART

The PRO Act has been introduced every Congress for the last decade. It does not pass without filibuster reform or a 60-vote bipartisan coalition that does not currently exist. Until that changes, the work is keeping it on the radar, building the coalition, and being ready when the political math shifts.

The Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act has even less momentum. The work is movement-building (with AFSCME, AFT, NEA, SEIU) rather than imminent passage.

Federal workforce bargaining (H.R. 2550) is the most viable of the three because the House already passed it. Brief 1.1 covers the Senate fight.

Labor rights legislation in this country has historically come in waves, on the heels of broad worker mobilization, in the 1930s, in the 1960s, and in the recent rebound. The work is being part of that wave when it comes, and being ready when it does.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- H.R. 20, Protecting the Right to Organize Act (PRO Act). Sponsors: Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA), Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT). 47 Senate Democratic cosponsors. No path to 60 Senate votes.
- H.R. 2736, Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act. Sponsors: Rep. Donald Norcross (D-NJ), Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-HI). Referred to committee April 8, 2025. No markup scheduled.

- H.R. 2550, Protect America's Workforce Act. See Brief 1.1.

SOURCES

- [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov) bill records for H.R. 20 and H.R. 2736.
- AFL-CIO scorecard for Andy Harris.
- NLRB regional office: [nlrb.gov](https://www.nlr.gov)

PARTNERS

AFL-CIO Maryland State and DC. UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers, Perdue organizing). IBEW (Aberdeen and Edgewood corridors). Carpenters. Operating Engineers. Plumbers and Pipefitters. Worker Center coalitions.

BRIEF 1.6

Social Security: You Paid In, You Get Yours

WHAT'S HAPPENING

You paid into Social Security every paycheck of your working life. The government took 6.2% off the top, and your employer matched it. That money was your contribution to a guaranteed retirement check, plus disability protection, plus survivor benefits for your spouse and kids.

You held up your end. Right now the deal is being undermined.

The "going broke" pitch.

Politicians and pundits will tell you Social Security is "going broke." That framing distorts the actual situation. The Social Security trust fund is projected to be unable to pay full benefits starting around 2033 unless Congress acts. If nothing is done, retirees would see roughly a 20% reduction in benefits, with the remaining 80% still flowing. The shortfall is a Congressional funding decision.

The "going broke" talk is usually a setup for two wrong answers: cutting benefits, or raising the retirement age. Both shift the cost onto the very workers who paid in.

The honest fix: lift the cap.

Social Security only taxes wages up to a cap. The 2025 cap was \$168,600. The 2026 figure is published by SSA each October and increases each year. A worker making \$50,000 a year pays Social Security tax on every dollar. A CEO making \$5 million a year pays Social Security tax only on the first \$168,600 or so and not a cent on the rest. Lifting or eliminating the cap alone would close most of the projected shortfall and let benefits expand.

The reconciliation attack on federal retirement supplements.

Brief 1.2 covers the May 2025 reconciliation bill (H.R. 1). The House-passed version of that bill would have eliminated the FERS (Federal Employees Retirement System) supplement starting January 2028. The FERS supplement is the bridge payment that lets federal workers retire before 62 and have income until Social Security kicks in. Andy Harris voted Present on H.R. 1, the only member of the House to do so, and the bill passed by a single vote. The Senate stripped the FERS supplement provision before the bill became law on July 4, 2025. The cuts were defeated, but the same proposals are expected to return.

Defending the SSA.

The Social Security Administration itself has been hit with workforce cuts. Field offices have closed. Wait times have grown. SSA-Woodlawn, in Baltimore County (with significant MD-01 commuter ties), has been impacted. Constituents trying to claim benefits they earned are being told to wait longer.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

A large share of MD-01 households receive Social Security benefits, including retirement, disability, and survivors benefits. The MD-01 retiree on Social Security is averaging about \$1,900 a month in benefits in 2026. If Congress lets the trust fund hit the projected shortfall in 2033 without acting, that retiree's check drops to about \$1,520 a month. That is \$380 a month gone. The math is the same for the widow on survivors benefits, the disabled worker on SSDI, and the federal retiree whose FERS supplement nearly disappeared in last year's reconciliation fight. Lifting the Social Security wage cap closes most of that gap by drawing more from high earners. The benefit-cut proposals close the gap by taking less from retirees who already paid in.

MY TAKE

You paid into Social Security through 6.2% of every paycheck for your entire working life. The government has to honor that contract. Anyone who tells you "we cannot afford it" is asking you to take less than you earned while people making \$5 million a year pay nothing past the cap. The honest fix is lifting that cap so high earners pay the same percentage everyone else does.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Cosponsor legislation to lift or eliminate the Social Security wage cap on high earners. Multiple bills exist (the Social Security 2100 Act and the Social Security Expansion Act among them). Cosponsor the strongest version.

Vote against any Social Security benefit cut. Any retirement age increase. Any privatization scheme.

Cosponsor legislation to expand Social Security benefits, including a more generous cost-of-living adjustment formula (CPI-E, which tracks senior costs more accurately than the current measure).

Cosponsor legislation to defend the FERS supplement against future cuts. The May 2025 House version of H.R. 1 would have eliminated it. The Senate stripped the provision; it will return.

Defend Social Security Administration funding and staffing in every appropriations cycle. Vote against any SSA workforce cut.

In the District

A district office case manager dedicated to Social Security claims, working with constituents whose SSA claims are stuck, denied, or under-processed. The case manager is fluent in retirement, disability, and survivor benefit cases.

Social Security clinics, rotating across MD-01 counties. Open hours where constituents can bring SSA paperwork and get help navigating it.

Specific outreach to retirees on the Lower Shore (Salisbury, Cambridge, Easton, Princess Anne). High concentration of fixed-income retirees. The clinic and the case manager should be visible there.

Through Oversight

Public report on SSA wait times and field office capacity in MD-01. Posted online.

Demand committee hearings on SSA workforce cuts and the impact on claimants. Get the SSA Commissioner on the record.

Letter to the Speaker and Appropriations chair every cycle: SSA staffing, full Social Security obligations, no benefit cuts.

THE HONEST PART

Lifting the Social Security cap requires legislation. The legislation needs a House majority that wants to do it and a Senate path that does not currently exist. Under current conditions, the work is keeping the legislation alive, building public support, and being ready when conditions change.

Defending the FERS supplement against the next attempt is the live fight. The Senate stripped the cut from H.R. 1 in 2025, but the same proposals will return in the next reconciliation cycle. The work is making sure the supplement survives the next round.

SSA staffing is administrative. Congressional pushback is appropriations and oversight, not a single bill.

The "going broke" frame is going to keep getting pushed. The work is countering it every time, with the math, with the honest fix, and with the names of who is profiting from the lie.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Social Security 2100 Act (multiple versions across Congresses). Lifts or eliminates the wage cap; expands benefits.
- Social Security Expansion Act (Sen. Bernie Sanders).
- H.R. 1, One Big Beautiful Bill Act (May 2025). See Brief 1.2 for full receipts on the FERS supplement cut. **Andy Harris voted Present.**

SOURCES

- SSA wage base history: ssa.gov/oact/cola/cbb.html
- SSA Trustees Report (annual): ssa.gov/OACT/TR
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) Social Security analysis
- AARP advocacy on Social Security expansion
- NARFE, "Federal Workforce Provisions Dropped from H.R. 1 Prior to Senate Passage" (July 1, 2025)

PARTNERS

National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare (NCPSSM). Social Security Works. AARP Maryland. AFL-CIO Maryland (retiree affiliates). NARFE.

BRIEF 1.7

The Right to Vote and Be Counted

WHAT'S HAPPENING

The most basic deal in American democracy is this: every American citizen gets a vote, and every vote gets counted. That is the deal. It is being broken in slow motion across the country, and the legislation that would fix it is sitting in Congress.

The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

This is the bill. H.R. 14 in the House. S. 2523 in the Senate. It was reintroduced in the 119th Congress on March 5, 2025, by Rep. Terri Sewell (D-AL). The bill restores the preclearance framework that the Supreme Court gutted in *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013), creates a modern coverage formula based on recent voting-rights violations, strengthens Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act in response to *Brnovich v. DNC* (2021), and expands the federal observer program.

Why preclearance matters.

Before *Shelby County*, jurisdictions with a history of voter suppression had to get federal approval before changing their voting rules. After *Shelby*, they did not. In the years since, those same jurisdictions have purged voter rolls, closed polling places, and tightened voter ID requirements without federal review. The John R. Lewis Act restores the federal review.

Section 2 erosion.

Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act lets voters sue when an election rule disproportionately burdens their right to vote. The Supreme Court has steadily narrowed Section 2. *Brnovich v. DNC* (2021) made it harder to challenge laws that disproportionately disenfranchise voters of color. *Louisiana v. Callais* further narrowed Section 2's reach. The John R. Lewis Act addresses both.

Maryland's role.

Maryland is not the worst-case state on voter suppression. We have same-day registration, mail voting, and well-staffed elections. But federal elections and federal protections are indivisible. What happens in Texas, Louisiana, or Georgia affects who controls the U.S. House and Senate. Marylanders cannot pretend that what happens elsewhere does not affect us.

Andy Harris's record.

The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act has come up for House votes in two prior Congresses. Andy Harris voted Nay on H.R. 4 in the 117th Congress (Roll Call 260, August 24, 2021, passed 219-212 along party lines) and Nay on H.R. 4 in the 116th Congress (passed 228-187 on December 6, 2019, also along party lines). The current 119th Congress version (H.R. 14, reintroduced March 5, 2025) has not yet had a House floor vote.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

MD-01 covers 11 counties and parts of 2. Each one runs its elections through a Board of Elections that follows state law. Maryland's voting infrastructure is reasonably strong.

But MD-01 voters are still affected when:

- A state with weaker voting rights gerrymanders its districts and shifts the U.S. House majority.
- A federal election turns on states with weaker voting rights protections.
- A Supreme Court decision changes what every state can do.
- A federal voting rights bill that would have helped voters in other states fails because Senators from states like ours did not move it.

The right to vote in MD-01 is also tied to local logistical questions. Polling place hours and locations. Ballot drop boxes. Mail ballot deadlines. Voter assistance for elderly and disabled voters. Mid-Shore counties with limited polling sites face access challenges that are different in kind from Baltimore County's.

MY TAKE

If your vote does not count, none of the rest of this plan matters. The right to vote is the foundation of every other deal this country has made, and protecting it is bipartisan baseline work that this Congress has refused to do.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Cosponsor the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (H.R. 14).

Vote yes on every roll call related to voting rights, including procedural votes. No "Present" votes on the right to vote.

Work with the Maryland delegation, especially Senators Van Hollen and Alsobrooks, to keep public pressure on the Senate filibuster question whenever voting rights legislation returns to the floor.

Cosponsor any companion legislation on automatic voter registration, voting rights restoration for formerly incarcerated people, and election worker protections.

In the District

A non-partisan voter assistance hotline operated out of the district office during early voting and on Election Day. The line helps any constituent who hits a barrier at the polls. This is constituent service, not campaign work, and that distinction is respected and enforced.

Plain-language publication of every voting rule change in MD-01 counties at least 60 days before any federal election. An early-warning system for voters. This does not require legislation. It requires staff and intention.

Voter education sessions across MD-01 counties. Open hours for questions about voter registration, mail ballot deadlines, polling place changes, and ID requirements.

Through Oversight

Annual public report on voting rule changes across MD-01. Posted online.

Engagement with the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division on any voting rights complaints originating from MD-01.

Coordination with the Maryland Attorney General on voting rights enforcement.

THE HONEST PART

The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act has passed the House before and stalled in the Senate over the filibuster. That dynamic has not changed. Until the Senate composition or rules change, the legislation does not become law.

The work of the first term is keeping the bill alive, building public pressure on the Senate, and using the district office to give MD-01 voters every legal protection currently available. The constituent service piece (hotline, early-warning system, voter education) does not require new legislation. It requires intent.

Pretending we can pass H.R. 14 in the next two years would be dishonest. Working hard on what is in our power, while keeping the larger fight alive, is what we can do.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- H.R. 14, John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (119th Congress). Sponsor: Rep. Terri Sewell (D-AL). Reintroduced March 5, 2025.
- S. 2523, Senate companion. Sponsor: Sen. Durbin (D-IL); cosponsors include Sens. Warnock, Schumer, Booker. Introduced July 29, 2025.
- H.R. 4, John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (117th Congress). House Roll Call 260, August 24, 2021. Passed 219-212 along party lines. **Andy Harris voted Nay.**
- H.R. 4, Voting Rights Advancement Act (116th Congress). House passed December 6, 2019, 228-187 along party lines. **Andy Harris voted Nay.**

COURT CASES

- *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 U.S. 529 (2013). Gutted preclearance.
- *Brnovich v. DNC*, 594 U.S. 647 (2021). Narrowed Section 2.
- *Louisiana v. Callais* (2026). Further narrowed Section 2; decided April 29, 2026, 6-3 (Alito majority).

SOURCES

- congress.gov bill record H.R. 14 (119th Congress)
- Sewell press release on H.R. 14 reintroduction (March 5, 2025)
- Brennan Center for Justice voting rights tracker
- NAACP LDF voting rights resources

- Brennan Center, Louisiana v. Callais explainer

PARTNERS

NAACP Legal Defense Fund. Brennan Center for Justice. Common Cause Maryland. ACLU of Maryland. League of Women Voters of Maryland. Maryland State Conference of the NAACP.

HEALTHCARE IS A HUMAN RIGHT

Healthcare is a human right. It should be affordable, it should be close by, and it should treat you with care. This is the foundation of how we care for each other in this country. In MD-01, too many of our neighbors live an hour from a specialist and a month from a mental health appointment. The fight is to make that right real in every household.

IN THIS THEME

2.1 Mothers Shouldn't Die Having Babies

2.2 Doctors When You Need Them

2.3 Care That Treats You Right

2.4 Coverage You Can Count On

2.5 Mental Health, Dental, and Vision for Everyone

BRIEF 2.1

Mothers Shouldn't Die Having Babies

WHAT'S HAPPENING

The United States has the highest maternal mortality rate of any wealthy country in the world. The rate for Black mothers is roughly three times the rate for white mothers. The CDC has consistently estimated that more than 80 percent of these deaths are preventable. We are losing mothers in the United States that we should not be losing.

Most of those deaths come down to access and follow-up. Pregnant patients should not have to drive an hour to see an obstetrician, and the 60-day postpartum Medicaid window leaves new mothers uninsured during the most medically dangerous part of recovery. Doula and midwives, who have decades of evidence behind them as life-saving for high-risk pregnancies, should be paid through Medicaid the same way other providers are.

The Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act is the legislative answer. It is a package of bills (originally led by Representatives Lauren Underwood and Alma Adams, and Senator Cory Booker) that together cover the things that actually drive mothers' deaths: the social drivers of health, the workforce shortage in obstetrics, maternal mental health, postpartum insurance coverage, doula and midwife integration, environmental hazards, and care for incarcerated and veteran mothers. The package was reintroduced in the 119th Congress.

Members of the Black Maternal Health Caucus have already secured more than \$200 million in maternal health appropriations over the past several cycles. The substance is well-developed. The block is making it law.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

MD-01 has its own maternal health story. The data ranks the Eastern Shore among the worst regions in Maryland for maternal outcomes.

Rural counties on the Eastern Shore have lost obstetric services. Pregnant patients in the lower Shore, especially Crisfield, Smith Island, and the southernmost reaches of Worcester and Somerset counties, often drive an hour or more to deliver a baby. UM Shore Easton serves Dorchester, and TidalHealth in Salisbury serves the central Lower Shore, but distances grow with each closure of a labor and delivery unit. The Eastern Shore consistently ranks among the worst regions in Maryland for prenatal access, low birthweight outcomes, and maternal morbidity.

Consider a new mother in Pocomoke. She gave birth at the only hospital that still does deliveries within an hour of her home. Sixty days after she leaves the hospital, her Medicaid coverage drops, right when postpartum depression most often hits. The first signs of preeclampsia and other postpartum complications also commonly show up in those weeks. Without a 12-month postpartum Medicaid extension, she is uninsured during the most medically dangerous window after giving birth.

Mothers in MD-01 are dying or coming close because the closest care is too far away or the coverage runs out too soon.

MY TAKE

A wealthy country in 2026 should not be losing mothers in childbirth at the rate the United States loses them. There is nothing partisan about saying every pregnant person in MD-01 deserves a doctor within driving distance, insurance that lasts past their first checkup, and a birth attendant trained for their pregnancy.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Cosponsor the full Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act, including every component bill rather than a curated subset.

Join the Black Maternal Health Caucus. Use the Caucus's appropriations work to direct federal maternal health funding toward Eastern Shore community-based maternal health organizations. The grant flow has historically gone to urban centers. The Shore deserves its share.

Cosponsor legislation to make 12-month postpartum Medicaid coverage permanent and federally required. Maryland adopted the option already; federal law should require it nationwide and protect it from rollback.

Cosponsor legislation to make doulas and midwives Medicaid-reimbursable providers. The evidence on doula support and birth outcomes is overwhelming. Federal Medicaid policy should accelerate state adoption.

In the District

A district office liaison for healthcare access issues, including maternal and prenatal care. The liaison helps constituents navigate Medicaid, find prenatal providers, and access the workforce-shortage solutions the Momnibus would fund.

The Eastern Shore Maternal Health Initiative, organized through Community Project Funding (the modern name for federal earmarks). Three priorities: mobile prenatal care for the lower Shore counties that have lost OB services; workforce pipeline grants for OB nurses, midwives, and lactation consultants based on Delmarva; and a perinatal mental health pilot at the Wicomico-Worcester level.

Maternal health convenings on the Eastern Shore, bringing together TidalHealth, Delmarva community health centers, the Maryland Maternal Health Innovation Program, doulas, midwives, and the Black Mamas Matter Alliance. The point is to keep the conversation open and the funding flowing.

Through Oversight

Public report from the district office on prenatal access by county in MD-01. Posted online. Updated annually.

Demand committee hearings on hospital closures of labor and delivery units in rural America. The Eastern Shore is a use case.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General and the Maryland Department of Health on enforcement of pregnancy discrimination and maternal care quality standards.

THE HONEST PART

The full Omnibus has not passed in three Congresses. The package is bipartisan in substance but partisan in passage. Without filibuster reform or a 60-vote bipartisan coalition, the omnibus version is unlikely to clear the Senate. The strategy is moving individual component bills, attaching pieces to appropriations bills, and using Caucus oversight to make sure the pieces that pass actually get implemented and funded.

The 12-month postpartum Medicaid extension is the most viable single piece in the near term. Most states have already adopted the option. Codifying it federally is the next step.

Federal Medicaid policy depends on state implementation. Even when federal law changes, states have to adopt and fund the changes. Maryland is in good shape; the broader fight is about the states that are not.

The hospital closure problem on the Eastern Shore cannot be fixed by federal legislation alone. It is a federal-state-local fight that needs investment in workforce, infrastructure, and reimbursement rates. Federal funding helps. It does not solve.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Black Maternal Health Omnibus Act (H.R. 7973, reintroduced March 18, 2026). Lead sponsors: Rep. Lauren Underwood (D-IL), Rep. Alma Adams (D-NC), Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ).
- Healthy MOM Act (H.R. 6242). 12-month postpartum Medicaid coverage. Sponsor: Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ).
- Doula and midwife Medicaid coverage legislation. Multiple bills across recent Congresses.
- Healthy Moms and Babies Act (S. 2289). The closest 119th Congress vehicle for several maternal health reforms.

SOURCES

- CDC maternal mortality data: [cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-infant-health/maternal-mortality](https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-infant-health/maternal-mortality)
- Maryland Maternal Health Innovation Program: health.maryland.gov/phpa/mch
- Black Mamas Matter Alliance: blackmamasmatter.org
- March of Dimes Maryland Report Card: marchofdimes.org/peristats/data/state-summary/Maryland
- Black Maternal Health Caucus: blackmaternalhealthcaucus-underwood.house.gov

PARTNERS

Maryland Maternal Health Innovation Program. Black Mamas Matter Alliance. March of Dimes Maryland. TidalHealth (Salisbury). Delmarva community health centers. National Birth Equity Collaborative.

BRIEF 2.2

Doctors When You Need Them

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Healthcare access in MD-01 is being squeezed on three fronts at once: doctors, hospitals, and nurses.

The specialist shortage.

The Eastern Shore has documented gaps in specialist care, particularly pediatric subspecialties (cardiology, neurology, behavioral health, developmental pediatrics). Families with sick kids drive to Baltimore, Wilmington, or Hopkins for care that should be available within an hour. The drivers are well-known. Medicare reimburses rural specialists less than urban peers under a formula called the Geographic Practice Cost Index (GPCI). The federal visa program for international physicians (Conrad 30) is over-subscribed in Maryland. Residency slots are concentrated in cities, and most physicians practice within 100 miles of where they trained. Telehealth flexibilities expanded during COVID and are now at risk of expiring.

The hospital closures.

UM Harford Memorial Hospital in Havre de Grace closed February 6, 2024, after 112 years. UM Upper Chesapeake opened a Medical Center in Aberdeen with a full emergency department, observation beds, and a Behavioral Health Pavilion. It does not have medical-surgical inpatient beds, an ICU, or inpatient surgery. The full-service hospital for Harford County is now in Bel Air. Residents in Havre de Grace, Perryville (just over the Susquehanna in Cecil), and the northern part of the county now face longer ambulance rides for inpatient and surgical care, walk-in access gaps, and continuity-of-care problems.

The Franklin Square emergency department.

MedStar Franklin Square Medical Center in eastern Baltimore County has some of the longest ED wait times in the state. Behavioral health patients board there for days waiting for psychiatric placement. Primary-care shortages in Essex, Middle River, Rosedale, and Dundalk push more people to the ED who should be in a clinic.

The nursing fight.

The administration has, in twelve months, made three federal moves that hit the nursing workforce hard. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act, signed July 4, 2025, eliminated Grad PLUS loans and capped graduate student federal borrowing at \$20,500 per year and \$100,000 lifetime, unless a degree is classified as "professional," in which case the cap is \$50,000 per year and \$200,000 lifetime. In November 2025, the Department of Education proposed a rule excluding nursing from the "professional degree" definition. Master's, DNP, and PhD nursing programs would be reclassified at the lower cap. The rule takes effect July 1, 2026 unless Congress or HHS intervenes.

At the same time, Title VIII (the federal Nursing Workforce Development Program, the primary federal funding stream for nursing education for more than half a century) had its authorization expire on October 1, 2025 during the federal shutdown. Funding is hanging on a continuing resolution at \$305 million annually. For comparison, Congress provides \$17.8 billion annually for graduate medical education for physicians.

In the middle of a documented nursing shortage, with hospital RN vacancy rates near 10 percent and 200,000 nurse openings projected per year, the federal government is cutting nursing funding, capping nursing loans below the cost of advanced practice degrees, and proposing a rule that says nursing is not a profession.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

Consider a senior in Havre de Grace who has a stroke at 2 AM. Before February 2024, the ambulance went to UM Harford Memorial, ten minutes away. Now it drives forty-five minutes to UM Upper Chesapeake in Bel Air for the kind of inpatient stroke care she needs. In stroke care, "time is brain." Forty-five minutes versus ten can be the difference between recovery and permanent disability.

The local nursing pipeline runs through Wor-Wic Community College, Salisbury University, UMES, Chesapeake College, Cecil College, and Harford Community College. Every one of those schools is now operating in a worse federal funding environment than they were a year ago. A nursing student at UMES who wanted to become a nurse practitioner is one Department of Education rule away from a \$30,000-a-year loan cap drop.

MY TAKE

Healthcare as a right means a child in Crisfield reaches a pediatric specialist, a senior in Havre de Grace gets an ambulance in time, and a nursing student at UMES can afford her degree. The federal levers exist for all three. The political will to use them is the question.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

On specialists:

- Cosponsor the Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act to expand residency slots in or rotating through the Eastern Shore.
- Cosponsor legislation to expand Conrad 30 / J-1 visa waiver slots and make the rural-specialty pathway more flexible.
- Push for fixing the Medicare GPCI and work-RVU floor for shortage areas. The current formula systematically underpays rural specialists.
- Make permanent the COVID-era Medicare telehealth flexibilities so tele-pediatric subspecialty care from Hopkins or University of Maryland Children's into Salisbury, Cambridge, and Easton can keep operating.

On hospitals:

- Cosponsor legislation supporting Rural Emergency Hospital designation pathways and reimbursement.
- Defend Maryland's Total Cost of Care Model at CMS. Maryland's unique Medicare waiver lets hospitals invest in upstream interventions, which is part of why safety-net facilities like Franklin Square stay financially viable.

- Support permanent authorization of the CMS Acute Hospital Care at Home program.

On Franklin Square specifically:

- Direct SAMHSA Crisis Stabilization Unit funding and 988 mobile crisis funding to eastern Baltimore County so EDs are not the default destination for psychiatric emergencies.
- Expand Federally Qualified Health Center capacity in the Essex / Middle River / Rosedale / Dundalk corridor through HRSA Section 330 grants.

On nurses:

- Cosponsor the Loan Equity for Advanced Professionals Act, the Professional Degree Restoration Act, and the Professional Student Degree Act. All three would explicitly include MSN, DNP, PhD, and other advanced nursing degrees in the federal "professional degree" definition.
- Cosponsor the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act of 2025 (H.R. 3593 / S. 1874). Push for funding above the \$305 million baseline.
- Defend the Nurse Faculty Loan Program and the Nursing Workforce Diversity Program against further cuts.
- Cosponsor the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act, requiring OSHA to issue an enforceable standard.
- Use the Congressional Review Act if necessary to block the November 2025 Department of Education rule before it takes effect July 1, 2026.

In the District

A district office liaison for healthcare access issues, paired with the maternal health liaison from Brief 2.1. Helps constituents navigate Medicare appeals, Medicaid coverage, FQHC referrals, and rural health resources.

A constituent-services review of whether parts of northeastern Harford County would benefit from a federally designated Rural Emergency Hospital, and whether existing UM Aberdeen meets the underlying access need or whether a supplemental facility is warranted.

Constituent-service oversight on UM Upper Chesapeake's promised shuttle service, behavioral-health bed expansion, and outpatient buildout in Harford County. The promises were made when Harford Memorial closed. My office tracks and publishes performance against them.

A specific outreach to the MD-01 nursing programs (Wor-Wic, Salisbury University, UMES, Chesapeake College, Cecil College, Harford Community College). Help them apply for Title VIII grants, HRSA Advanced Nursing Education grants, and Nurse Faculty Loan Program funding, with priority on clinical preceptor support, the bottleneck that turns away qualified nursing applicants nationally each year.

Through Oversight

Public letters to CMS demanding renewal of the Maryland Total Cost of Care Model on terms that protect Franklin Square and other safety-net facilities.

Demand committee hearings on the Department of Education's "professional degree" rulemaking and the Title VIII funding shortfall.

Coordinate with Maryland's Attorney General on Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement enforcement.

Annual public report on emergency department wait times, ambulance response times, and nursing workforce vacancy rates by MD-01 county. Posted online.

THE HONEST PART

The specialist shortage cannot be solved by federal legislation alone. It requires medical education investment, residency placement, reimbursement reform, and visa policy working together. Federal levers are real but slow. The Conrad 30 expansion is the most viable single piece in the near term.

Reopening Harford Memorial is not feasible. The hospital is gone. The fight is making sure UM Aberdeen and the Bel Air full-service hospital actually meet the access need, and that Northern Harford has the EMS, telehealth, and outpatient capacity to fill the gap.

The Maryland Total Cost of Care Model renewal is up to CMS. Maryland's congressional delegation has to make the case. Federal majority composition matters less than CMS leadership for this fight.

The nursing fights are time-sensitive. The Department of Education rule takes effect July 1, 2026 unless intervened. The Title VIII reauthorization needs a vehicle (probably an end-of-year omnibus or appropriations bill). Both are within reach if the political pressure stays on.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act (H.R. 4731 / S. 2439). Bipartisan.
- Loan Equity for Advanced Professionals Act (H.R. 6574). Restores nursing professional-degree status for federal student aid purposes.
- Professional Degree Access Restoration Act (H.R. 6677 / S. 4039). Restores nursing professional-degree status for federal student aid purposes.
- Professional Student Degree Act (H.R. 6718). Restores nursing professional-degree status for federal student aid purposes.
- Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act of 2025 (H.R. 3593 / S. 1874).
- Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

- One Big Beautiful Bill Act, signed July 4, 2025. Eliminated Grad PLUS loans and capped graduate student federal borrowing.
- Department of Education proposed rule, November 2025 (RISE negotiated rulemaking). Excludes nursing from the "professional degree" definition. Effective July 1, 2026 unless intervened.
- Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Program authorization expiration, October 1, 2025.

SOURCES

- Bureau of Labor Statistics, registered nurses occupational outlook

- HRSA Health Professional Shortage Areas
- CMS Maryland Total Cost of Care Model
- American Nurses Association on the professional degree rule

PARTNERS

TidalHealth (Salisbury). University of Maryland Shore Regional Health. MedStar Health. UM Upper Chesapeake Health. Maryland Hospital Association. Maryland Health Care Commission. American Nurses Association. American Association of Colleges of Nursing. National Black Nurses Association. Maryland Nurses Association. MD-01 nursing programs (Wor-Wic, Salisbury University, UMES, Chesapeake College, Cecil College, Harford Community College).

BRIEF 2.3

Care That Treats You Right

WHAT'S HAPPENING

There are two separate fights inside this one. Both come down to whether the healthcare system treats patients like people.

Kennedy Krieger on the Eastern Shore.

In 2026, the Maryland Capital Budget appropriated \$5 million (\$2.5 million Senate, \$2.5 million House) to launch a new Kennedy Krieger Institute facility in Wicomico County. The facility is a special education school for students with developmental and behavioral disabilities whose needs cannot be met in the local public school system. It is the result of a three-year advocacy effort led by Healthy Minds for Shore, the Greater Salisbury Committee, and Wicomico County Public Schools.

The facility is a school, not a hospital. It is not a general healthcare access expansion. Families on the Shore who need pediatric specialty care, complex inpatient care, or rehabilitation services still need separate pathways (see Brief 2.2). Anyone in Annapolis or Washington who claims this single facility solves the Shore's pediatric healthcare problem is overselling it.

Discrimination and mistreatment in healthcare.

The other half of treatment-with-respect is what happens when a patient is dismissed, racially profiled, denied appropriate pain management, or discriminated against. The federal mechanisms that should catch and punish this are real, but they are systematically under-staffed and, since January 2025, actively narrowed.

Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act prohibits discrimination in any health program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. That covers essentially every hospital, every nursing home, and every Medicare or Medicaid provider in MD-01. The protected categories include race, color, national origin, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity under the 2024 final rule), age, and disability. Enforcement runs through the HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR). The 2024 final rule, after eight years of litigation and rulemaking, included strong language access requirements, prohibitions on discriminatory use of clinical algorithms, and explicit Bostock-aligned protections for LGBTQIA+ patients. The current administration has narrowed enforcement, particularly the gender identity and pregnancy termination provisions, and OCR staffing has been cut substantially.

The federal government has additional levers beyond Section 1557: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (race, color, national origin in federally-funded programs), the Americans with Disabilities Act (Title III for hospitals as public accommodations), the Age Discrimination Act, the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA, which requires emergency departments to screen and stabilize every patient regardless of ability to pay), the CMS Conditions of Participation (the rules every Medicare-participating hospital must follow), and HIPAA privacy enforcement. These are powerful tools when enforced. They have been spotty in practice, particularly for Black patients.

The evidence on racial disparities in healthcare is no longer in dispute. Black patients receive less pain medication for the same conditions, are misdiagnosed and dismissed at higher rates than white patients, and are discharged earlier than is clinically appropriate. Black women die in childbirth at three times the rate of white women (see Brief 2.1). The Institute of Medicine documented all of this in its 2003 report "Unequal Treatment," and the patterns have not meaningfully changed in the 23 years since.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

A family in Salisbury whose child has autism gains a new educational pathway through Kennedy Krieger. That family still needs a developmental-behavioral pediatrician, a speech therapist, and an occupational therapist within driving distance. The school does not replace the rest of the care.

The accountability piece shows up differently. Consider a Black mother in Pocomoke who arrives at an emergency department in active labor and is dismissed without a proper screening. Under EMTALA, that hospital had a federal obligation to screen and stabilize her. Under Section 1557, racial discrimination in her treatment is illegal. Without an HHS Office for Civil Rights staffed to investigate, without a Joint Commission citation that has consequences, and without a CMS condition of participation that the hospital actually fears losing, those federal protections live only on paper. The MD-01 patient population also includes growing Spanish-speaking and Haitian Creole-speaking communities, especially in Salisbury, Cambridge, and parts of Baltimore County. "We did not have an interpreter" should not be how a hospital's deposition starts.

MY TAKE

Care happens when nurses are supported, patients are heard, discrimination is documented, and institutions face consequences for failure. A federal representative who says they care about healthcare access has to work on all four.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

On Kennedy Krieger and pediatric specialty care:

- Pursue federal grant alignment for the Kennedy Krieger Eastern Shore facility through HHS, HRSA, and Department of Education funding streams (Autism CARES Act, IDEA Part B, HRSA developmental-behavioral pediatrics).
- Coordinate with TidalHealth and University of Maryland Shore Regional Health on building out the broader pediatric specialty network around the Salisbury hub.

On Section 1557 and OCR:

- Vote against further cuts to HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) staffing and budget.
- Defend the 2024 Section 1557 final rule against rollback, including the gender identity, pregnancy termination, language access, and clinical algorithm provisions.

- Cosponsor legislation to strengthen Section 1557 enforcement: a private right of action for compensatory damages, clarification that disparate-impact claims are available, and authorization for the Attorney General to bring federal civil actions in patterns-and-practices cases.

On EMTALA, ADA, and CMS:

- Defend EMTALA against administrative narrowing of emergency abortion care obligations under HHS. A patient in a medical emergency, including a pregnancy emergency, must be screened and stabilized.
- Push CMS to use Conditions of Participation more vigorously, including patterns of discrimination as a basis for survey citation. Decertification from Medicare is the strongest accountability tool the federal government has over hospitals.

On transparency and data:

- Defend and expand the Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act framework. Hospitals should report publicly, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, sex, language, and disability status, on patient safety events, hospital-acquired conditions, readmissions, mortality, and patient complaints.
- Defend the AHRQ National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report, which has been a target. It is the federal government's only systematic public accounting of healthcare disparities.

On training and language access:

- Make implicit bias and cultural competence training a condition of federal grant funding for clinical training programs (HRSA, AHRQ, HHS workforce programs). Maryland already requires this for license renewal in several health professions; federal programs should align.
- Defend the 2024 Section 1557 language access requirements.

In the District

An MD-01 patient ombudsman function in the district office. When a constituent believes they have been mistreated or discriminated against in a healthcare setting, the office helps them file with HHS OCR, with CMS, with the Joint Commission, and with the Maryland Department of Health. The office tracks the patterns. This is constituent service that has not historically been provided in this district.

Help Kennedy Krieger and partner organizations apply for federal grants that complement the state capital funding.

A district office liaison for Spanish-speaking and Haitian Creole-speaking constituents on healthcare access issues, including language access complaints under Section 1557.

Through Oversight

Use congressional inquiry power to push CMS, AHRQ, and the Maryland Health Care Commission to publish patient-experience and outcome data for MD-01 hospitals broken out by race, ethnicity, language, and insurance status.

Public letters to HHS OCR on individual MD-01 complaints. The threat of public attention is part of how compliance happens.

Annual report from the district office on civil rights complaints filed against MD-01 hospitals and their resolution.

THE HONEST PART

The Kennedy Krieger Eastern Shore facility is a state-funded school. Federal funding can complement it but not replace the state capital investment. Federal alignment work is real but bounded.

OCR enforcement depends on the administration in power. Defending the 2024 Section 1557 rule is a defensive fight as long as the current administration runs HHS. The work is keeping the rule alive in court and in regulation, and limiting damage from rollback.

A private right of action for Section 1557 has been introduced in prior Congresses and not passed. It needs a Senate path that does not currently exist. Until then, the work is OCR oversight and CMS Conditions of Participation enforcement.

The patient ombudsman function does not require federal legislation. It requires staff and intent. It is one of the most concrete things a member of Congress can do that almost nobody actually does.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Section 1557 enforcement strengthening legislation (private right of action, disparate impact, AG civil actions). Multiple bills introduced in recent Congresses.
- Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act (cross-reference Brief 2.2).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. § 18116). 2024 final rule.
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d).
- Americans with Disabilities Act, Title III (42 U.S.C. § 12181 et seq.).
- Age Discrimination Act of 1975.
- Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act, EMTALA (42 U.S.C. § 1395dd).
- CMS Conditions of Participation (42 C.F.R. § 482).
- HIPAA Privacy Rule.

COURT CASES

- Idaho v. United States (2024). The U.S. Supreme Court dismissed the case as improvidently granted (DIG), declining to resolve the EMTALA emergency-abortion question on the merits. The current narrowing of emergency abortion care under EMTALA is happening administratively under HHS, not by Supreme Court ruling.

STATE FUNDING

- 2026 Maryland Capital Budget appropriation for Kennedy Krieger Eastern Shore: \$5 million (\$2.5M Senate, \$2.5M House).

SOURCES

- HHS Office for Civil Rights: hhs.gov/ocr
- AHRQ National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report
- Institute of Medicine, "Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care" (2003)
- Kennedy Krieger Institute: kennedykrieger.org

PARTNERS

HHS Office for Civil Rights. Maryland Department of Health. Maryland Health Care Commission. NAACP Maryland State Conference. Maryland Legal Aid (health justice unit). Disability Rights Maryland. Healthy Minds for Shore. Greater Salisbury Committee. Wicomico County Public Schools. Kennedy Krieger Institute. TidalHealth. University of Maryland Shore Regional Health.

BRIEF 2.4

Coverage You Can Count On

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Federal healthcare coverage in MD-01 runs through four programs: Medicaid, the ACA marketplace, Medicare, and Medicaid HCBS waivers (which fund Maryland's Developmental Disabilities Administration, DDA). All four have been damaged in the past year. The damage is layered.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act and Medicaid.

The OBBBA, signed July 4, 2025, imposed work requirements on Medicaid and tightened eligibility through faster redetermination cycles. The Congressional Budget Office and independent analyses confirm coverage losses on a scale not seen since the ACA passed in 2010. Millions of Americans have been pushed off Medicaid rolls. The harm is concentrated in rural areas (much of MD-01) and among the working poor who lose coverage between paperwork cycles even when they remain eligible.

ACA premium subsidies.

The Inflation Reduction Act's enhanced ACA premium tax credits dramatically lowered marketplace premiums and brought enrollment to record highs. The OBBBA narrowed those subsidies and made them less generous. Restoring them is the single fastest way to lower healthcare costs for working families in this district.

Medicare.

Medicare's drug-price negotiation authority, won under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA Title I, Subtitle B, Part 2), is being challenged by the pharmaceutical industry and at risk of administrative rollback. Medicare Advantage plans, which now cover more than half of all Medicare beneficiaries, have well-documented problems with prior-authorization abuses, upcoding, and network narrowing. Traditional Medicare still does not cover dental, vision, or hearing.

Maryland's DDA cuts.

Governor Moore proposed \$150 million in cuts to the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration in his FY2027 budget, on top of \$164 million in cuts the year before. After advocacy from families and the Developmental Disabilities Coalition, the General Assembly reduced this year's cut to \$126 million and blocked a proposed individual-budget cap. The cuts include reductions to wages for self-directed care providers, the parents, siblings, and personal-care assistants who keep people with developmental disabilities out of institutions. These are state decisions, but most DDA services run through Medicaid HCBS waivers, where the federal government supplies the larger half of the funding through Medicaid match dollars.

The pattern across all four is the same. Coverage that used to work is being squeezed. The cumulative effect on a household in MD-01 is fewer people insured, higher premiums for those who are, and fewer support services for families who depend on them.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

Consider a Worcester County small business owner who buys health insurance through the Maryland Health Connection marketplace. Under the Inflation Reduction Act's enhanced premium tax credits, his monthly premium dropped to a level he could budget around. After the OBBBA narrowed those credits, his premium went up roughly \$300 a month. That is \$3,600 a year out of a small business owner's pocket for the same coverage he had before. Multiply that by the small business owners and self-employed workers across the Lower Shore, and you have one specific corner of the federal coverage squeeze hitting MD-01.

The pediatric specialist drive (Brief 2.2), the maternal mortality rate (Brief 2.1), and the Eastern Shore VA wait (Brief 1.4) all get worse when the underlying insurance coverage is also being squeezed.

MY TAKE

A country that has Medicare, Medicaid, the ACA, and HCBS waivers already has the architecture of universal coverage. The fight in this Congress is to stop the cuts, restore what has been taken, and expand the parts that work. That is the substance of defending healthcare as a right.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

On Medicaid (reverse the OBBBA damage):

- Cosponsor legislation to repeal the OBBBA Medicaid work requirements, redetermination acceleration, and eligibility narrowing.
- Restore the enhanced Medicaid match for expansion states and protect Maryland's expansion population.
- Cosponsor legislation to broaden categorical Medicaid eligibility for postpartum, behavioral health, and dental coverage.

On the ACA marketplace:

- Cosponsor legislation to make the IRA-era enhanced ACA premium tax credits permanent and extend them above 400 percent of the federal poverty line.
- Close the family glitch permanently. The 2022 administrative fix is good but should be statutory.
- Cosponsor a Medicare-pegged public option through the Maryland Health Connection marketplace.

On Medicare:

- Defend Medicare's drug-price negotiation authority (IRA Title I, Subtitle B, Part 2) against industry challenges and rollback efforts.
- Cosponsor legislation to lower the Medicare eligibility age to 60.
- Expand traditional Medicare to include dental, vision, and hearing (see Brief 2.5).

- Cosponsor legislation to tighten Medicare Advantage oversight, including prior-authorization limits, upcoding penalties, and network adequacy enforcement. Bring Medicare Advantage into closer alignment with traditional Medicare on access and appeals.

On HCBS and DDA:

- Cosponsor the HCBS Access Act and any successor legislation to fund waiver waitlists and stabilize direct support professional wages.
- Cosponsor legislation to permanently raise the federal Medicaid match rate for Home and Community-Based Services. A higher federal share reduces pressure on state budgets to cut services like Maryland's Community Pathways waiver.
- Push for a federal direct support professional wage floor through Medicaid reimbursement policy.

In the District

A district office case manager dedicated to coverage issues: Medicaid redeterminations, ACA marketplace navigation, Medicare appeals, Medicare Advantage prior-authorization disputes, and HCBS waiver waitlists. Most coverage problems show up at the kitchen-table level. The district office has to be ready to help.

A public roundtable with DDA-impacted families from MD-01 in the first term, working with The Arc Maryland and the Self-Directed Advocacy Network. The point is to listen and to bring federal pressure where state pressure has fallen short.

Coverage clinics across MD-01 counties. Open hours where constituents can bring insurance paperwork and get help.

Specific outreach to Maryland Medicaid (Maryland Medical Assistance) and the Maryland Health Connection navigator program to coordinate enrollment and re-enrollment work.

Through Oversight

Annual report from the district office on coverage losses by program and county in MD-01. Posted online.

Public letters to CMS on Medicare Advantage prior-authorization patterns affecting MD-01 beneficiaries. Use congressional inquiry power to surface aggregate denial rates by plan and condition.

Coordination with the Maryland Attorney General on insurance market enforcement, including ACA marketplace consumer protection.

Demand committee hearings on the OBBBA's Medicaid coverage losses. Get HHS, CMS, and OMB on the record.

THE HONEST PART

Repealing the OBBBA Medicaid provisions requires a House majority that wants to do it. Until that exists, the work is preventing further erosion, defending Medicaid expansion in Maryland, and making sure the redetermination process is administered as gently as possible at the state level.

The IRA-era ACA subsidies and the Medicare drug negotiation authority are policy gains that have to be defended every appropriations cycle. They are not safe. The work is keeping them.

The Maryland DDA cuts are state decisions. A federal representative cannot reverse them by fiat. What the federal government can do is increase the HCBS match rate, fund waiver waitlists, and set a federal floor for direct support professional wages. Those changes reduce the budget pressure that pushed Maryland to cut DDA in the first place.

A federal public option through the Maryland Health Connection has been proposed before. It does not pass without a Senate path. The work is keeping the legislation alive and ready.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Legislation to repeal the OBBBA Medicaid provisions. Multiple bills in current Congress.
- IRAACA subsidy permanence legislation. Multiple bills.
- Family glitch statutory fix legislation.
- Medicare eligibility age reduction. Standalone bills exist; Medicare for All variations also include this.
- HCBS Relief Act of 2025 (S. 2076). The closest 119th Congress vehicle for HCBS Access Act priorities.
- Federal HCBS match rate increase legislation.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (Title I, Subtitle B, Part 2, Medicare drug negotiation; ACA enhanced premium tax credits).
- One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 (P.L. 119-21). Medicaid work requirements and eligibility changes; ACA subsidy narrowing.
- Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waivers under Section 1915(c) and Section 1115 of the Social Security Act.

SOURCES

- Congressional Budget Office analysis of OBBBA coverage effects
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) analysis of Medicaid changes
- Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) on ACA subsidies and Medicare Advantage
- Maryland Department of Health, Medicaid
- Maryland Health Connection
- Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration
- The Arc Maryland

PARTNERS

The Arc Maryland. Self-Directed Advocacy Network. Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition. AARP Maryland. AFSCME Council 67 (Maryland public employees). Maryland Medicaid Matters Coalition. Maryland Health Connection navigators. NCPSSM Maryland.

BRIEF 2.5

Mental Health, Dental, and Vision for Everyone

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Mental health care, dental care, and vision care are still treated as optional extras in the federal healthcare system, even though every one of them affects whether people can work, live independently, and stay healthy.

Mental health.

The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act has been federal law since 2008. It says insurance plans cannot put more restrictive limits on mental health care than they do on physical health care. In practice, enforcement has been weak. Networks for mental health providers are inadequate. Prior authorization is heavier on mental health than on physical health. Reimbursement rates push mental health providers out of insurance networks entirely, so even insured patients pay out of pocket or do without.

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline has handled millions of calls since launch. Federal funding for 988 and for the Press 1 veterans-specific line is at risk in every appropriations cycle.

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (signed 2022) funded school-based mental health services that have built capacity in MD-01 schools. That funding needs reauthorization.

Dental.

Traditional Medicare does not cover most dental care. The ACA marketplace requires pediatric dental coverage but not adult coverage. Roughly one in four American adults has gone without needed dental care in the past year because they could not afford it. The Eastern Shore has documented dental deserts, especially in Worcester, Somerset, and Dorchester counties.

Vision and hearing.

Traditional Medicare does not cover routine eye exams, glasses, or hearing tests, and only covers limited hearing aid services. The 2022 OTC hearing aid rule was a start but did not solve access for the people who most need it. Untreated hearing loss is now well-documented as a contributor to cognitive decline in older adults, an issue that hits a retirement-heavy district like MD-01 hard.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

Consider a retiree in Easton with progressive hearing loss. His doctor recommended hearing aids that would cost him \$2,000 out of pocket. Traditional Medicare does not cover them. He has been hearing thirty percent less for three years because he cannot afford to spend \$2,000 on the recommendation. The longer he waits, the higher his cognitive risk goes. Federal Medicare policy is the difference between him hearing his grandkids and not.

The 988 line in Maryland has been a lifeline for veterans, for LGBTQIA+ youth, and for anyone in crisis. The federal funding behind it is what keeps it on.

MY TAKE

Your teeth, your eyes, your ears, and your mental health are not optional. Treating them as if they were is one of the most expensive lies the federal healthcare system tells. Cheap preventive care now costs less than the disability and crisis care that comes later when problems go untreated.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

On mental health:

- Cosponsor legislation giving the Department of Labor, HHS, and state insurance regulators clear authority and resources to audit and penalize parity violations under the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (enacted December 27, 2020) reporting requirements need teeth.
- Cosponsor legislation expanding Medicare and Medicaid coverage to include licensed marriage and family therapists, licensed mental health counselors, peer support specialists, and community health workers. Maryland and many other states have moved on this; federal Medicare needs to catch up.
- Defend 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline funding and the Press 1 veterans line in every appropriations cycle.
- Defend and expand the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act's school-based mental health funding when it comes up for reauthorization.

On dental:

- Cosponsor the Medicare Dental Benefit Act when introduced, with full coverage of routine and preventive dental care, not the watered-down option that limits coverage to dental services tied to other medical procedures.
- Cosponsor legislation expanding the federal definition of essential health benefits under the ACA to require adult dental coverage in marketplace plans.
- Push federal funding for dental therapy training programs and Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) dental clinics. The Shore has documented dental deserts.

On vision and hearing:

- Cosponsor legislation adding comprehensive vision and hearing coverage to traditional Medicare. Routine eye exams, glasses, hearing tests, and hearing aids should be covered.
- Push Medicare expansion of diabetic eye disease screening in rural areas. Low cost, high payoff for an aging Shore population.

In the District

A district office liaison for mental health, dental, and vision access. The liaison helps constituents navigate parity complaints, find in-network therapists, locate FQHC dental capacity, and access Medicare Advantage dental and vision riders where available.

Coverage clinics across MD-01 counties (paired with Brief 2.4 clinics) include mental health, dental, and vision navigation help.

A specific outreach to MD-01 schools using Bipartisan Safer Communities Act funding to make sure the funding reaches the schools that need it.

A specific outreach to senior centers across the district on Medicare Advantage dental, vision, and hearing benefits, including how to compare plans and what is actually covered.

Through Oversight

Public letters to the Department of Labor and HHS on mental health parity enforcement. Use congressional inquiry power to surface aggregate data on parity violations by insurance plan.

Annual report from the district office on mental health provider availability, dental clinic capacity, and vision and hearing service access in MD-01.

Push the Maryland Insurance Administration and the Maryland Attorney General on parity enforcement at the state level.

THE HONEST PART

The Mental Health Parity Act is on the books. Enforcement is the work. Neither full statutory amendment nor regulatory enforcement happens without administration cooperation. The work is keeping pressure on Department of Labor and HHS regulators and supporting state-level enforcement.

A Medicare dental benefit has been proposed for years. The political block is the cost score and the dental industry. The work is keeping the legislation alive and ready.

A Medicare vision and hearing benefit is in similar territory. The OTC hearing aid rule was a partial win. The full benefit needs legislation that has not yet passed.

The 988 funding fight is annual. School-based mental health funding is on a multi-year reauthorization cycle. Both need defenders every cycle, not just every Congress.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Mental Health Parity Act enforcement legislation (multiple bills strengthening 2008 MHPAEA and 2020 CAA reporting requirements).
- Medicare Dental Benefit Act (H.R. 2045 / S. 939 / S. 2084). Multiple introductions in 119th Congress.

- Medicare vision and hearing coverage legislation.
- ACA essential health benefits expansion (adult dental coverage requirement).
- Bipartisan Safer Communities Act reauthorization.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA).
- Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (parity reporting requirements).
- Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022 (school mental health funding).
- ACA essential health benefits framework.
- OTC Hearing Aid Rule (2022, FDA).

SOURCES

- 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: 988lifeline.org
- Department of Labor parity enforcement
- Maryland Insurance Administration
- KFF on Medicare dental, vision, and hearing

PARTNERS

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Maryland. Mental Health Association of Maryland. Maryland Dental Action Coalition. AARP Maryland. Maryland Insurance Administration. SAMHSA-funded community mental health centers. MD-01 school districts.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Clean water, clean air, and a healthy place to live are basic rights. From Somerset to Baltimore County, that means taking care of the water up to and including saying "no" to data centers. Environmental justice means every county in MD-01 gets the same protection, not just the wealthy zip codes. The polluters who profit by breaking these rights have to pay for it.

IN THIS THEME

3.1 **The Bay and the Polluters Killing It**

3.2 **Offshore Wind Done Right**

3.3 **Climate, FEMA, and Crisfield**

3.4 **Watermen: A Trade Worth Saving**

3.5 **Family Farms in the Future**

3.6 **The Land Worth Keeping**

BRIEF 3.1

The Bay and the Polluters Killing It

WHAT'S HAPPENING

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in North America. It runs through the heart of MD-01. It is also being killed slowly by nutrient pollution that drives dead zones and harmful algal blooms, and the federal government has been treating polluters like they are too big to penalize.

The poultry runoff problem.

Industrial poultry operations are central to MD-01's economy. Perdue is the largest. They are also a documented major source of nitrogen and phosphorus runoff into the Bay. Maryland imposes nutrient management requirements, and the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) sets pollution limits across the watershed. Enforcement, in practice, relies heavily on voluntary practices and modest fines that a company Perdue's size absorbs as a routine cost of doing business while running periodic public-relations cleanup events.

The contract grower trap.

The chicken houses on the Shore are mostly owned and operated by family farmers under contract to Perdue and other integrators. The contract structure dictates what the grower can and cannot do, including how they handle waste. Environmental liability lands on the grower's federal tax ID, not the integrator's. Federal policy has been letting the integrators set the terms while the families take the regulatory hit.

The drinking water problem.

Cecil, Kent, Harford, and Dorchester counties have documented drinking-water and stormwater concerns. Vienna in Dorchester County has had nitrate problems and aging infrastructure for years. The town's position has been that residents fund improvements first, even though EPA's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA), and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's lead-pipe replacement money exist for exactly this kind of fix.

The political mapping problem.

The previous member of Congress directed federal water funding by ZIP code along political lines, with some MD-01 communities receiving their share while others were skipped.

The Chesapeake Bay Program is itself under threat.

EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program is the federal backbone of restoration efforts. The administration has repeatedly proposed deep cuts. Funding cuts at NOAA, USGS, and EPA monitoring stations mean the data that would prove polluter accountability is being deleted in real time.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

Take Vienna, in Dorchester County. The town has had documented nitrate problems in its drinking water and aging infrastructure for years. The town's response to its residents has been that locals fund the improvements first. EPA's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's lead pipe replacement money, and USDA Rural Utilities Service grants exist for exactly this kind of fix, but federal funding has not flowed to Vienna. The same pattern shows up in towns across the district.

For people in MD-01, the Bay is the working basis of household income, commercial fishing, tourism, and the towns built around the water. When the Bay dies, those collapse together.

MY TAKE

Polluters who profit by breaking the watershed should pay for the watershed. The payment should be a condition of continuing to do business, large enough to deter the conduct. Federal water money should be allocated by documented need, regardless of how the recipient community votes.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

On polluter accountability:

- Cosponsor or introduce legislation tying federal contracts, USDA programs, and federal facility-siting eligibility to documented compliance with Clean Water Act and Chesapeake Bay TMDL obligations. Repeat or systemic violators should lose federal funding eligibility, not just pay fines. Modeled on existing federal debarment frameworks.
- Cosponsor legislation requiring major industrial-agriculture operations on Bay tributaries to publish nutrient discharge and runoff monitoring data publicly, in near-real time, the way major NPDES permit holders already do for direct discharges.
- Cosponsor legislation putting environmental responsibility where the operational control sits: with the integrator, not the contract grower.

On the Chesapeake Bay Program:

- Defend EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program funding in every appropriations cycle.
- Cosponsor legislation expanding the Bay Program's enforcement authority where states have under-delivered on the 2025 milestones.
- Defend NOAA, USGS, and EPA monitoring stations. Without water-quality monitoring data, accountability for polluters is impossible.

On drinking water and stormwater:

- Defend the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's lead service line replacement funding and require state pass-through transparency. Towns should know which jurisdictions are getting the money and which are being skipped.
- Expand USDA and EPA programs to upgrade or replace failing septic systems for low-income homeowners. Failing septic is a major Bay nutrient source on the Shore.
- Cosponsor legislation expanding PFAS testing and remediation funding for every public water system in the district. Forever chemicals are not just a Western Maryland or DOD-installation problem.

On targeted Shore funding:

- Direct USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), manure-to-energy projects, and stream buffer programs to MD-01 specifically.

In the District

A district-wide water needs assessment in the first term, working with the Maryland Department of the Environment, USGS, and the Chesapeake Bay Program. The deliverable: a public, county-by-county inventory of drinking-water and stormwater needs in MD-01. Federal money flows to whichever counties show up on the inventory.

A direct federal funding push to the worst-affected systems first. Vienna's residents are not going to be told to put their own money up before the federal government helps. The district office uses Community Project Funding requests, EPA State Revolving Fund set-asides, and USDA Rural Utilities Service grants to fund the actual fix.

A dedicated district office liaison for water and Bay issues, working with contract growers, watermen, towns, and environmental groups. The point is to keep the line of communication open.

Annual public report on every federal water dollar coming into MD-01 by county. Posted online.

Through Oversight

Public letters to EPA on TMDL enforcement against Perdue and other major Bay polluters. Use congressional inquiry power to surface aggregate compliance and violation data.

Demand committee hearings on the administration's proposed cuts to the Chesapeake Bay Program, NOAA, USGS, and EPA monitoring.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General on state-federal enforcement of nutrient management requirements.

THE HONEST PART

Reversing the Bay's nutrient pollution problem requires the watershed states (Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, West Virginia, New York, plus DC) to all hit their TMDL milestones. Federal authority can push, but the underlying work happens at the state level.

Tying federal funding to Clean Water Act compliance is a real lever but takes legislation that has not yet passed. The work is keeping that legislation alive and finding bipartisan vehicles for it.

PFAS remediation is an emerging field. Federal funding is real but limited. The work is making sure MD-01 systems are in line for the funding that exists.

The Vienna fix is a pilot. If we can show federal money flowing to actual rural drinking water needs in MD-01 in the first term, the model spreads.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Federal debarment legislation tying federal contracts and USDA programs to Clean Water Act and Chesapeake Bay TMDL compliance. To be drafted or cosponsored.
- Real-time pollution monitoring legislation for industrial agriculture operations on Bay tributaries.
- Integrator liability legislation.
- Chesapeake Bay Program reauthorization (multiple bills across recent Congresses).
- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law lead service line replacement funding (already enacted; defense fight ongoing).
- PFAS remediation funding expansion (multiple bills).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1251 et seq.).
- Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (Bay TMDL): epa.gov/chesapeake-bay-tmdl
- EPA Drinking Water State Revolving Fund: epa.gov/dwsrf
- Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA): epa.gov/wifia
- USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Reserve Program, Conservation Stewardship Program.
- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (P.L. 117-58) lead service line replacement provisions.

SOURCES

- EPA Chesapeake Bay Program: epa.gov/chesapeake-bay
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation: cbf.org
- ShoreRivers: shorerivers.org
- Waterkeepers Chesapeake: waterkeeperschesapeake.org
- Maryland Department of the Environment: mde.maryland.gov
- Choptank Riverkeeper: shorerivers.org/choptank-riverkeeper

PARTNERS

Chesapeake Bay Foundation. ShoreRivers. Waterkeepers Chesapeake. Choptank Riverkeeper. Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper. Maryland Department of the Environment. Eastern Shore Land Conservancy. Town of Vienna. Local watershed associations across MD-01.

BRIEF 3.2

Offshore Wind Done Right

WHAT'S HAPPENING

The Maryland Offshore Wind Project, developed by US Wind in federal Lease Area OCS-A 0490 about 10 nautical miles off Ocean City, has been working through a decade-long permitting process. In December 2024, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) approved the Construction and Operations Plan, authorizing up to 114 turbines with a potential capacity of 2,200 megawatts. That is enough to power roughly 718,000 Delmarva homes. The transmission cables would make landfall in Sussex County, Delaware, with a substation near Dagsboro.

The project is now under attack from three directions.

The Ocean City lawsuit.

In October 2024, Ocean City and co-plaintiffs filed suit challenging federal approval of the project. In July 2025, a federal judge allowed five of the claims to proceed.

The Trump administration order.

In early 2025, the administration ordered the withdrawal of offshore wind leases for "further review." A Massachusetts federal court struck the order down in December 2025 as arbitrary and capricious. That ruling was a win, but the administrative posture against offshore wind continues.

The tax credit narrowing.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (signed July 4, 2025) narrowed the federal tax credits that anchor the project's financing. The on-site construction deadlines built into the OBBBA put the project's incentives at risk. Renewable energy financing depends on federal predictability, and the OBBBA cut into that predictability.

A March 2026 Delaware Court of Chancery ruling cleared a substation permit hurdle. The project is moving forward, but it is in the legal and political crosshairs.

The benefits of the project, if it gets built, are concrete:

- Lower long-run electricity costs across the Delmarva grid.
- Supply-chain jobs at Sparrows Point and Tradepoint Atlantic.
- Mariner and welder work in Baltimore and on the Shore.
- Progress on Maryland's 50-percent renewable mandate.
- A piece of the climate response that puts steel in the water.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

For working voters in MD-01, offshore wind is two things at once: a job opportunity and a long-term electricity-cost reducer.

The construction work is union work. IBEW locals in the Aberdeen and Edgewood corridors are part of the supply chain. The Carpenters, the Operating Engineers, and the trades active at Sparrows Point and Tradepoint Atlantic stand to benefit. The mariner and welder work along the Bay is real.

For ratepayers, offshore wind reduces long-run exposure to natural gas price spikes and adds capacity that does not require new fossil-fuel infrastructure on the Shore.

For Ocean City, the visual concerns are real. A wind farm 10 nautical miles offshore is still visible on a clear day, and the town's tourism economy depends on the beach experience.

MY TAKE

I support offshore wind.

It is the right vote on the merits anyway. The project lowers electricity costs, creates union jobs in MD-01, and contributes to the state's renewable mandate. Saying that on the record, while engaging Ocean City honestly about the visual impacts, is part of the job.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Publicly and unambiguously support the Maryland Offshore Wind Project. The benefits outweigh the visual concerns, and that statement should be on the record.

Vote against and work to repeal the OBBBA provisions that narrow offshore wind tax credits for already-approved projects. Renewable energy financing depends on federal predictability.

Cosponsor or introduce legislation creating a federal floor for community-benefits agreements on offshore renewable projects. Coastal communities that host transmission infrastructure should see contractually guaranteed benefits: lower utility bills, dedicated workforce training slots, and tourism mitigation funds where impacts are documented.

Defend BOEM's regulatory authority over offshore wind permitting against administrative interference.

Cosponsor legislation expanding the federal Investment Tax Credit and Production Tax Credit timelines for offshore wind.

In the District

Regular meetings with the Mayor of Ocean City and the Town Council. The opposition is real and deserves a hearing. Closing the door on Ocean City does not move the project forward.

Push BOEM to hold listening sessions with Ocean City and the surrounding coastal communities before, during, and after construction. Not just at the permitting stage.

Coordinate with IBEW, the Carpenters, the Operating Engineers, and the Maryland Building Trades on workforce pipeline alignment. Make sure MD-01 workers get the training slots and the union jobs that come with the project.

Coordinate with the watermen organizations on construction timing and impact mitigation in the lease area.

Through Oversight

Public letters to BOEM on community-benefit alignment for the Maryland Offshore Wind Project.

Annual public report on the project's status, including job numbers, electricity rate impacts, construction milestones, and outstanding legal challenges.

THE HONEST PART

The Ocean City lawsuit may delay the project further. The work is making sure the federal approvals are legally durable and that the litigation does not become a permanent veto.

The administration's tax credit narrowing was bad for renewable energy financing nationally. Restoring those credits requires a House majority that wants to do it. Until then, the work is keeping the existing credits intact and pushing back against further erosion.

Saying yes to offshore wind is the unpopular political choice in some MD-01 precincts. The honest pitch to Ocean City is that the project is going to be built, federal litigation is unlikely to stop it permanently, and the better move is to negotiate hard for community benefits rather than try to stop the project entirely.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Inflation Reduction Act renewable energy provisions (Title III, energy tax credits). Already enacted; defense fight ongoing.
- One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 (P.L. 119-21). Narrowed offshore wind tax credit timelines.
- Federal community-benefits framework legislation for offshore renewable projects. To be drafted or cosponsored.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) offshore wind permitting authority.
- Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act.
- Investment Tax Credit and Production Tax Credit (Internal Revenue Code).

COURT CASES

- Ocean City of Maryland v. BOEM. Filed October 2024. Five claims allowed to proceed July 2025.
- Massachusetts v. Trump (D. Mass.). December 9, 2025 ruling by Judge Saris struck down administration order to withdraw offshore wind leases as arbitrary and capricious.

- Delaware Court of Chancery substation permit ruling, March 25, 2026.

SOURCES

- BOEM Maryland Offshore Wind Project page: boem.gov/renewable-energy/state-activities/maryland
- US Wind project page: uswindinc.com
- Maryland Energy Administration: energy.maryland.gov
- Maryland Public Service Commission: psc.state.md.us

PARTNERS

US Wind. IBEW Local 24 (Baltimore region). The Carpenters Mid-Atlantic Regional Council. Operating Engineers Local 37. Maryland Building Trades. Maryland Energy Administration. Maryland Sea Grant. Chesapeake Climate Action Network. Climate XChange Maryland.

BRIEF 3.3

Climate, FEMA, and Crisfield

WHAT'S HAPPENING

MD-01 is the most water-defined congressional district in Maryland, with the Atlantic Ocean on its eastern coast, the Chesapeake Bay running through its middle, and eight tidal rivers (Pocomoke, Nanticoke, Wicomico, Choptank, Chester, Sassafras, Susquehanna, Patapsco) plus extensive inland swamps and tidal flats defining the rest of the geography. Many of the district's drinking water systems run on pipes laid before the New Deal. Climate change here looks like the tide pulling at Crisfield's foundations 90 days a year.

Crisfield and BRIC.

In April 2025, FEMA announced it was terminating the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program and clawing back grants already awarded. Crisfield had been awarded \$36 million in July 2024. It was the highest-scoring BRIC project in the country in fiscal year 2023. That grant was nine times the town's entire annual budget. Twenty states, including Maryland, sued. In December 2025, a federal judge ruled the termination unlawful. In March 2026, FEMA reopened BRIC applications for fiscal years 2024 and 2025. But Crisfield's original obligation is still in limbo. The second phase of the project (another \$36 million for which the city had applied) has not been restored.

Other Bay-region BRIC projects are in similar limbo: \$16 million for Cambridge flood mitigation; \$32 million for Patapsco Middle Branch wetlands restoration in South Baltimore (of which \$26 million was rescinded before the December 2025 ruling); and Maryland's 31 dropped FY24 BRIC applications totaling roughly \$70 million.

FEMA staffing and posture.

The administration has cut staffing and floated proposals to dissolve or shrink FEMA entirely, framing the agency as broken to justify the cuts. A federal disaster response capability that is failing should be repaired and rebuilt rather than dissolved.

The Western Maryland disaster declaration denial.

In May 2025, Western Maryland floods produced more than \$33 million in validated FEMA damages, nearly three times the state's qualifying threshold. The administration denied the disaster declaration. Maryland appealed; Maryland was denied again. While that disaster sits in MD-06, the precedent threatens every part of MD-01 the next time we have a hurricane, a derecho, or a major coastal storm.

Climate science under attack.

The administration has cut staffing at NOAA, the National Weather Service, EPA, USGS, and the Chesapeake Bay Program. Forecasting, hurricane track modeling, marine forecasting, and Sea Grant research are not optional services for a district like ours. Andy Harris voted with the administration on every relevant cut.

The math.

BRIC projects, on average, return six to eight dollars in avoided disaster costs for every dollar spent. Restoring the funding pays for itself many times over.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

The Mayor of Crisfield, Darlene Taylor, and the Greater Crisfield Action Coalition spent years securing the BRIC grant. Crisfield floods 90 days a year now. The grant was supposed to be the start of building the seawall and pump infrastructure that keeps the town habitable. It is sitting in administrative limbo while the water keeps rising. The Mayor of Cambridge is in the same position with the \$16 million Cambridge flood mitigation award. South Baltimore is in the same position with the Patapsco wetlands restoration. Every coastal community in MD-01 with property near a tidal river is downstream of these decisions. Without NOAA forecasting, the next hurricane lands without proper warning. Without the Chesapeake Bay Program, the watershed restoration falls apart (see Brief 3.1). Without USGS and EPA monitoring, the polluter accountability data goes dark.

This is what happens when a federal government decides climate adaptation is optional.

MY TAKE

The towns on the Bay and the rivers of MD-01 cannot save themselves. The math does not work for a town of three thousand people to fund its own seawall, which is what federal disaster mitigation is for. Without it, Crisfield disappears.

OUR PLAN***In Congress*****On Crisfield and BRIC:**

- Restore Crisfield's full \$36 million BRIC obligation, and fight for the full Southern and Northern Crisfield Flood Mitigation Project, not phase one alone.
- Cosponsor legislation to harden BRIC against future administrative termination. The program was created during the first Trump administration through the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018. Statutory protection should require congressional approval for any program-wide rescission.
- Restore Cambridge's \$16 million flood mitigation funding, the \$32 million Patapsco Middle Branch wetlands restoration, and Maryland's 31 dropped FY24 BRIC applications.

On FEMA:

- Defend FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund in every appropriations cycle.
- Oppose the administration's effort to dissolve or shrink FEMA.
- Push for Senate-confirmed FEMA leadership.

On disaster declarations:

- Cosponsor legislation requiring objective criteria and congressional review of disaster declaration denials. Federal disaster declarations cannot be politicized.
- Restore the Western Maryland disaster declaration if possible, and use the precedent fight to protect MD-01's eligibility for future events.

On climate science:

- Defend NOAA and National Weather Service staffing in every appropriations cycle. We need our forecasting and marine services.
- Defend the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program funding (cross-reference Brief 3.1).
- Defend USGS and EPA water-quality monitoring stations.
- Defend Sea Grant reauthorization.
- Defend NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge funding.

On coastal resilience:

- Direct NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge funding, Coastal Zone Management Act funding, and BRIC funding to Smith Island, Deal Island, Hooper's Island, Tilghman, Crisfield, Cambridge, Salisbury's riverfront, and the Susquehanna communities at the same time, not as a competition between them.

In the District

A district office liaison for FEMA, BRIC, and disaster mitigation issues. Helps Crisfield, Cambridge, Salisbury, Smith Island, Deal Island, Hooper's Island, Tilghman, and other communities navigate FEMA grant applications, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funding, and Pre-Disaster Mitigation funding.

A constituent-services partnership with the Greater Crisfield Action Coalition and Mayor Taylor's office to track BRIC obligation status, push federal release of held funds, and identify additional federal mitigation funding streams.

Annual public report on every FEMA, BRIC, NOAA, and EPA dollar coming into MD-01 by county. Posted online.

A rapid-response disaster declaration support function in the district office. When a storm hits MD-01, the office is ready to coordinate FEMA paperwork for the affected jurisdictions and to push for proper disaster declaration support.

Through Oversight

Public letters to FEMA on the status of held BRIC obligations, including Crisfield's.

Demand committee hearings on the administration's FEMA dissolution proposals and disaster declaration denials.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General on the BRIC litigation and any future FEMA-related litigation affecting MD-01.

Annual oversight letter to NOAA, EPA, USGS, and the National Weather Service requesting MD-01-specific staffing data and service delivery metrics.

THE HONEST PART

Crisfield's BRIC obligation depends on FEMA disbursing the funds. The federal court ruled the termination unlawful, but FEMA still has to release the money. Pressure has to stay on the agency.

Restoring the broader BRIC pipeline depends on appropriations. Without a House majority that wants to fund disaster mitigation at the BRIC scale, the work is preventing further cuts and keeping the legislation ready.

The Western Maryland disaster declaration denial cannot be reversed retroactively without administrative cooperation. The precedent fight matters more than the individual denial at this point.

NOAA, EPA, USGS, and Chesapeake Bay Program staffing cuts are administrative. Reversing them requires either administrative cooperation or new appropriations. The work is keeping the agencies alive and credible until conditions change.

The towns on the Bay cannot save themselves alone. Federal funding is the only sustainable path. Any plan that pretends otherwise is misleading constituents.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 (DRRA) (P.L. 115-254). Created BRIC; needs statutory hardening against rescission.
- BRIC reauthorization and statutory protection legislation. To be cosponsored or introduced.
- Disaster declaration objective criteria legislation.
- Sea Grant reauthorization (recurring).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act) (42 U.S.C. § 5121 et seq.).
- FEMA Disaster Relief Fund.
- NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge.
- Coastal Zone Management Act.
- BRIC program (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities).

COURT CASES

- Multi-state suit challenging FEMA's BRIC termination (federal district court ruling December 2025).

SOURCES

- FEMA BRIC program: [fema.gov/grants/mitigation/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities](https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities)
- Crisfield BRIC project documentation (FEMA grant award announcement, July 2024).
- Maryland Department of Emergency Management: mdem.maryland.gov
- NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge: coast.noaa.gov/funding/climate-resilience-regional-challenge.html
- Maryland Sea Grant: mdsg.umd.edu

PARTNERS

City of Crisfield (Mayor Darlene Taylor). City of Cambridge. Greater Crisfield Action Coalition. Smith Island and Deal Island advocacy groups. Hooper's Island residents. Tilghman Watermen's Association. Eastern Shore Land Conservancy. Maryland Department of Emergency Management. Maryland Department of the Environment. Maryland Sea Grant.

BRIEF 3.4

Watermen: A Trade Worth Saving

WHAT'S HAPPENING

From the 1800s through the early 1970s, Black watermen were central to the Chesapeake Bay's seafood industry. Some of the very first Black Americans legally classified as citizens, sixty-seven years before the Emancipation Proclamation, were sailors carrying federal Seamen's Protection Certificates. At the height of the skipjack era, according to fifteen years of research by Vincent Leggett of the Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation, at least one in ten Bay boats had a Black captain. Black-owned seafood companies (Coulbourne and Jewett in St. Michaels, Bellevue Seafood Company in Bellevue, the Crisfield packing houses with their majority-Black crab pickers) supplied much of what the country ate.

That tradition has all but disappeared. Black watermen captains in active commercial work on the Maryland side of the Bay can today be counted on a hand or two. The decline has many drivers.

The oyster collapse.

The Chesapeake oyster harvest fell from roughly six million bushels in 1880 to under one hundred thousand annually now. Disease, overharvest, and water quality decline (see Brief 3.1) all contributed.

Capital costs.

Consolidation in the seafood industry priced family operations out. The boats, the licenses, the dockside facilities, and the working capital all cost more than they used to.

Civil Rights-era outmigration.

As employment opportunities opened in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and DC after the Civil Rights Movement, the Black workforce on the Bay thinned. The trade did not pass to the next generation in the same numbers it had before.

The license structure.

This piece gets less attention than it should. Maryland's commercial waterman license allocation effectively transfers licenses through family inheritance. New entrants without a relative willing to put a license in a will face barriers that fall hardest on Black families whose generational connection to the trade was already severed by the economic pressures listed above.

The result is a working Bay fishery with almost no Black captains, almost no Black-owned packing houses, and a pipeline that does not reach the families that used to be central to the trade.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

Bellevue, in Talbot County, was settled in the aftermath of the Civil War and became a center of Black waterman life on the Eastern Shore. Black-owned seafood operations there (W.A. Turner and Sons from 1945 to 1996, and Bellevue Seafood Company from 1964 to 1998) were the heart of the community for much of the twentieth century. The packing houses in

Crisfield were staffed by Black women who picked the crabs that the seafood industry built its profits on. St. Michaels, Tilghman, Smith Island, Deal Island, and Rock Hall all had Black watermen working the same waters as their white counterparts.

The waters have not changed. The trade is still economically viable for someone with the capital and the access. What stops Black participation now is federal and state policy that determines who can buy in.

A young man in Crisfield whose grandfather worked the packing houses cannot get a commercial waterman license without a relative in the trade willing to pass one down. A young woman in Cambridge who has the skills and the desire to start an oyster aquaculture business cannot get the startup capital from a conventional bank. A Black-owned seafood restaurant in Salisbury or Easton struggles to source local Bay product because the supply chain is locked into a small number of consolidated operators.

The Bay industry is still working and still needs labor. The pipeline of families who used to fill those jobs has been broken by federal and state policy.

MY TAKE

The Bay is the heritage of every family on its shores, Black families included. The fishery has historically excluded Black watermen through inheritance rules and capital barriers. The federal government has tools that can help open it back up, and that work is what environmental justice and economic justice mean for the Eastern Shore.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Direct federal grant funding to Black waterman entry programs through NOAA Sea Grant, USDA Rural Development, the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), and the Small Business Administration (SBA). Fund licensing assistance, mentorship, and capital programs for new and returning Black watermen and women. Specifically include older entrants, not just youth. Many of those most ready to come back to the trade are in their forties and fifties.

Direct dedicated federal grant funding to minority-led aquaculture startups: land-based and floating leases, hatcheries, training, and certification. Imani Black's Minorities in Aquaculture has the model. Federal funding should flow to it.

Direct SBA 8(a), MBDA, USDA Value-Added Producer Grants, and CDFI lending to Black-owned seafood processors and Black-owned restaurants featuring Bay seafood. Cross-reference Brief 5.4 (Help for Small and Black-Owned Businesses) for the small business support framework.

Use federal civil-rights review authority to examine state commercial waterman license allocation patterns. License allocation is a state DNR responsibility, but federal grant conditions, federal civil-rights review, and the political weight of a sitting member of Congress can move state policy.

Defend the USDA Section 2501 Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program, which extends to fishery operators (cross-reference Brief 3.5).

In the District

A district office liaison for the Bay seafood industry, with a specific focus on Black waterman entry, minority-led aquaculture, and Black-owned seafood businesses.

A standing seat at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources table on commercial waterman license allocation. Working with DNR, the General Assembly, and waterman organizations until the path to entry is open to families that lost it.

Annual public report on federal seafood industry funding flowing to MD-01, broken out by recipient demographics where data is available.

Specific outreach to Vincent Leggett's Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation, Imani Black's Minorities in Aquaculture, the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Watermen Project, and the Tilghman Watermen's Association. The point is to keep the conversation open and the funding flowing.

Through Oversight

Public letters to NOAA Sea Grant, USDA Rural Development, and SBA on grant allocation patterns affecting Black watermen and minority-led aquaculture in Maryland.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General and the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights on license allocation patterns at DNR.

THE HONEST PART

Reopening the commercial waterman license structure is a state DNR fight. A federal representative cannot change it by fiat. What federal pressure, federal grant conditioning, and federal civil-rights review can do is push the state to act. That is real but bounded.

Aquaculture is the most viable single piece in the near term. The capital threshold is lower than wild harvest, the federal funding streams exist, and the model has been demonstrated. The work is making sure MD-01 is at the front of the line for the funding.

The oyster harvest is unlikely to return to 1880 levels. The Bay restoration work in Brief 3.1 is the larger fight. Without water quality, no waterman trade survives, regardless of who holds the license.

Black-owned seafood businesses face the same capital access problems Black-owned businesses face generally (see Brief 5.4). Federal small business support is a real lever, but it requires the right administrative posture at SBA and MBDA.

RECEIPTS

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- NOAA Sea Grant: seagrant.noaa.gov
- USDA Rural Development: rd.usda.gov
- Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA): mbda.gov

- SBA 8(a) Business Development Program: sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-assistance-programs/8a-business-development-program
- USDA Value-Added Producer Grant program.
- USDA Section 2501 Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program.
- Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund: cdfifund.gov

SOURCES

- Vincent Leggett, Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation: blacksofthechesapeake.org
- Imani Black, Minorities in Aquaculture: mianpo.org
- National Trust for Historic Preservation, Watermen Project (Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania).
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Commercial Waterman Licensing: dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Pages/commercial/index.aspx
- Maryland Sea Grant: mdsg.umd.edu

PARTNERS

Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation. Minorities in Aquaculture. National Trust for Historic Preservation Watermen Project. Tilghman Watermen's Association. Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Maryland Sea Grant. NAACP Maryland State Conference.

BRIEF 3.5

Family Farms in the Future

WHAT'S HAPPENING

MD-01 farmers are not having a good year.

The tariff problem.

Tariffs imposed by the current administration have raised input costs (fertilizer, equipment, parts) while collapsing key export markets. Soybean, corn, dairy, and grain prices have moved against MD-01 producers. Farm bankruptcies are up. Many MD-01 farmers voted for the policies that are now squeezing them. When you sit down and talk to them, most are looking for a federal trade and agricultural policy that lets their farms run profitably without an annual bailout backstop. Andy Harris voted for every tariff package and every USDA cut.

Black farmer land loss.

Black farmers nationally and on the Shore have lost land at a rate sharply higher than white farmers. The legacy is decades of USDA discrimination and heir-property challenges. The Pigford and Pigford II settlements were supposed to address some of this. Many MD-01 Black farming families never received what they were owed.

Food deserts.

Food deserts cover much of Wicomico, Somerset, and Dorchester counties. Entire census tracts have no full-service grocery store within reasonable distance. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (P.L. 119-21, signed July 4, 2025) made the food access situation significantly worse. The new law narrows SNAP eligibility (the parental caregiver exemption for adults caring for children was tightened from "children under 18" to "children under 14"), excludes refugees, asylees, and trafficking survivors from SNAP eligibility, and shifts the federal share of state SNAP administrative costs from 50 percent to 25 percent starting in FY2027. The Congressional Budget Office scored the OBBBA SNAP changes at \$69 billion in cuts over ten years.

SNAP at farm stands.

SNAP benefits, while widely available at supermarkets, are unevenly accepted at farmers markets and produce stands. The infrastructure (EBT processing equipment, partnerships with farmers, federal program enrollment) is uneven across MD-01.

The climate-smart agriculture rollback.

The Inflation Reduction Act funded climate-smart agriculture practices (cover cropping, no-till, nutrient management). On Delmarva specifically, those practices also reduce Bay nutrient runoff (cross-reference Brief 3.1). Subsequent legislation has clawed back much of that funding.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

A poultry contract grower in Wicomico County is paying forty percent more for feed than she paid two years ago. The tariff packages raised the cost of every input she buys. Her per-bird payment from the integrator is unchanged. She voted in 2024 expecting a different outcome. She is facing bankruptcy in 2026. Federal agricultural policy is the difference between her staying on the land and not.

MY TAKE

A federal government that says it cares about rural America but votes for tariffs that bankrupt rural farmers is lying about which one it cares about. The fix MD-01 farmers want is federal trade and agricultural policy that stops crushing their input costs and export markets. Bailout cycles only paper over the damage from bad trade policy.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

On tariffs and trade:

- Vote against and work to repeal the tariff packages squeezing MD-01 farmers.
- Cosponsor legislation requiring Congressional approval for emergency tariff actions, reasserting the authority that has drifted to the executive branch over decades.

On USDA programs:

- Defend the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Farm Service Agency, and Rural Development against further cuts.
- Direct USDA funding to MD-01 producers proactively.
- Restore the climate-smart agriculture investments from the Inflation Reduction Act. These were direct payments to farmers practicing cover cropping, no-till, and nutrient management. On Delmarva, they also addressed Bay nutrient runoff.

On Black farmers and heir property:

- Defend and expand the USDA Section 2501 Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program. It is the federal vehicle for Black farmer support and has been narrowed and challenged.
- Cosponsor legislation expanding USDA's Heirs' Property Relending Program, which provides capital to clear title on heir property and lets families access USDA programs. This is one of the most important Black-farmer policies almost no one talks about.
- Pursue federal review of unprocessed and disputed Pigford and Pigford II claims affecting MD-01 families.

- Direct USDA Microloan, FSA Beginning Farmer, and Value-Added Producer Grants with set-asides for socially disadvantaged farmers, proactively to MD-01 producers.

On food access and food deserts:

- Cosponsor the Healthy Food Financing Initiative reauthorization (H.R. 3506) and push for expansion to fund grocery stores, food cooperatives, and farmers market infrastructure in MD-01 food deserts.
- Cosponsor expansion and full funding of USDA's Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), which doubles SNAP dollars when used to buy fresh produce.
- Direct federal grants to fund EBT processing equipment for every farmers market and farm stand in MD-01 that wants to accept SNAP.
- Cosponsor legislation reversing the OBBBA SNAP narrowing, including the caregiver exemption tightening, the non-citizen exclusion, and the state administrative cost shift.
- Cosponsor expansion of USDA's Local Agriculture Market Program to fund mobile farmers markets and rural produce delivery, especially partnered with churches and senior centers in food-desert communities.

On the future of MD-01 agriculture:

- Cosponsor crop diversification grants. MD-01 is over-concentrated in poultry and grain. Federal support for diversification (specialty crops, regenerative agriculture, hemp, value-added processing) reduces risk for farmers and integrator dependence.
- Cosponsor legislation treating aquaculture as agriculture for federal program eligibility (cross-reference Brief 3.4).

In the District

A district office liaison for agriculture, with a specific focus on small farmer support, Black farmer support, and food access. Helps constituents navigate USDA programs, FSA loans, EQIP applications, and Pigford claims.

Application clinics across MD-01 counties, rotating through Cecil, Harford, Talbot, Caroline, Queen Anne's, Kent, Wicomico, Somerset, Dorchester, and Worcester. Walk farmers through USDA programs in person.

Specific outreach to Black farming families on heir property issues, working with the National Black Farmers Association and the Federation of Southern Cooperatives.

Specific outreach to MD-01 farmers markets, food cooperatives, and church-based food access programs to expand SNAP acceptance and GusNIP doubling.

Annual public report on federal agriculture funding flowing to MD-01, by program and by county. Posted online.

Through Oversight

Public letters to USDA on Section 2501 program funding, Heirs' Property Relending Program implementation, and Pigford claim review.

Demand committee hearings on the tariff impact on rural America, including specific testimony from MD-01 farmers.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General and the Maryland Department of Agriculture on enforcement of agricultural fair-dealing laws.

THE HONEST PART

Reversing the tariff regime requires either administrative cooperation or new legislation that has not yet passed. Until either happens, the work is making sure MD-01 farmers know who voted for the tariffs and who is fighting against them.

The OBBBA SNAP narrowing is law (P.L. 119-21). Reversing it requires a House majority that wants to. Until then, the work is preventing further erosion and supporting the state and nonprofit infrastructure that fills the gaps. Maryland's General Assembly will face the FY2027 administrative cost shift directly. Federal pressure can help; state leadership has to backstop.

USDA program direction depends on the Secretary of Agriculture and the administration. Federal pressure can move some grant flow toward MD-01, but the broader USDA posture is set by the White House.

The Pigford settlements are decades old. Federal review of unprocessed claims is a real lever but bounded.

Food deserts in Wicomico, Somerset, and Dorchester are not solvable by any single federal program. The fix is layered: grocery stores, farmers markets, mobile produce, SNAP acceptance, federal support for local food systems, and state Department of Health partnership. The work is all of it at once.

RECEIPTS

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- USDA Section 2501 program: [usda.gov/topics/farming/socially-disadvantaged-farmers-and-ranchers](https://www.usda.gov/topics/farming/socially-disadvantaged-farmers-and-ranchers)
- USDA Heirs' Property Relending Program: fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/heirs-property-relending-program
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).
- USDA Microloan, FSA Beginning Farmer, Value-Added Producer Grants.
- Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP).
- Healthy Food Financing Initiative.
- USDA Local Agriculture Market Program.
- USDA Farm Service Agency.
- USDA Rural Development.

SETTLEMENTS

- Pigford v. Glickman (1999) and Pigford II (2010). Discrimination against Black farmers by USDA.

SOURCES

- USDA Farm Service Agency: fsa.usda.gov
- USDA Risk Management Agency: rma.usda.gov
- USDA Food Access Research Atlas: ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas

- Maryland Department of Agriculture: mda.maryland.gov
- Maryland Farm Bureau: mdfarmbureau.com
- National Black Farmers Association: blackfarmers.org
- Federation of Southern Cooperatives: federation.coop

PARTNERS

Maryland Farm Bureau. National Black Farmers Association. Federation of Southern Cooperatives. Future Harvest CASA (Mid-Atlantic regenerative agriculture). Maryland Department of Agriculture. UMES Extension. Salisbury University food systems initiatives. Eastern Shore food banks (Maryland Food Bank Eastern Shore branch).

BRIEF 3.6

The Land Worth Keeping

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Conservation funding is one of the few policy areas where rural Republicans and Democrats usually agree. Hunters, anglers, farmers, and land trusts share the same federal and state programs, and those programs have had bipartisan support in normal times. The current MD-01 fight is whether the funding survives at all. Several of those programs are under pressure at the same time.

The Chesapeake Bay Program funding cliff.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL, P.L. 117-58, 2021) dedicated \$238 million over five years to EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program, on top of baseline appropriations. Fiscal year 2026 is the fifth and final year. The BIL Bay authorization expires September 30, 2026. Without congressional action before that date, the supplemental Bay funding stream ends. The Bay Program is the federal coordinating mechanism for watershed restoration across six states and the District of Columbia. Without that supplemental funding, the cost shifts back onto states that have already cut their own conservation budgets.

National Wildlife Refuge staffing collapse.

The Chesapeake Marshlands National Wildlife Refuge Complex is the federal agency umbrella for Blackwater (Dorchester), Eastern Neck (Kent), Martin (Smith Island), and Susquehanna (Cecil). In 2025 the complex went from 23 staff to 11. All 11 are stationed at Blackwater HQ. Eastern Neck, Martin, and Susquehanna have zero on-site staff. Blackwater crew members drive a four-hour round trip to Eastern Neck for routine maintenance. Across the Atlantic Coast, Assateague Island National Seashore had zero lifeguards in 2025. National Park Service permanent staff is down 24 percent since January 2025. All of these cuts were administrative actions; Congress has not blocked them.

Maryland Program Open Space cuts.

Program Open Space (POS) is the state's main land conservation funding stream, paid for by the 0.5 percent real estate transfer tax. In the 2025 General Assembly session, \$100 million was diverted from POS over four years (FY2026 through FY2029), and POS was the only state special fund taking cuts of that size in that span. The Maryland Department of Legislative Services initially recommended a 100 percent elimination of land preservation funding through 2029, before public pressure forced a partial reversal. The estimated impact is roughly 20,000 acres statewide that would have been permanently protected and now will not be. Most of that loss falls on the Eastern Shore, where the easement queue is longest.

The Bay Restoration Fund split and sunset.

Maryland's Bay Restoration Fund (BRF, the "flush tax" on water bills) sunsets in 2030 absent legislative action. The septic-tier portion of BRF is split roughly 60 percent for septic system upgrades and 40 percent for cover crops. The federal cover-crop side of that math runs through USDA NRCS programs, including EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) and CSP

(Conservation Stewardship Program). When the federal share for cover crops is unstable, Maryland's state budget has to absorb more of the cost out of BRF, which limits what BRF can do for septic upgrades, watershed monitoring, and other priorities. Federal cover-crop reliability is therefore a Maryland Bay-restoration funding question.

Blue catfish and the MAWS Act.

Blue catfish are an invasive species in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. They prey on native species (rockfish, blue crabs, white perch) and disrupt the food web. Watermen want to harvest them at scale, but blue catfish are the only fish species inspected by the USDA rather than the FDA, a regulatory anomaly created by 2008 and 2014 Farm Bill provisions originally designed to protect domestic farm-raised catfish from imports. The USDA inspection regime imposes facility, equipment, and reporting requirements that other fish processors do not face, which has crippled the human-consumption market for wild-caught Bay blue catfish. The MAWS Act (Mitigation Action and Watermen Support Act, H.R. 4294, sponsored by Rep. Sarah Elfreth and Rep. Rob Wittman) passed the House on March 16, 2026 and is now in the Senate. The MAWS Act creates a NOAA grant program for blue catfish processing aimed at the pet food and animal feed market. That helps with disposal, but the underlying inspection-transfer fix that watermen need (move blue catfish back to FDA inspection so processors can scale to human consumption) is a separate fight that has not yet passed.

Baltimore County's Urban-Rural Demarcation Line.

The Urban-Rural Demarcation Line (URDL) has been Baltimore County's main land-use boundary since 1967. Inside the line, county water and sewer service is available and development is concentrated. Outside the line is rural, with conservation easements and agricultural preservation as the dominant land use. The county's official preservation goal is 80,000 acres. The current preserved figure is approximately 72,217 acres. Closing that 7,800-acre gap requires sustained federal cost-share funding through NRCS-ACEP (the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program), the USDA Forest Legacy Program, Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) state-side grants, and Farm Bill Title II conservation programs. The same federal levers that protect the Eastern Shore protect the URDL.

Andy Harris's record.

Andy Harris chairs the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies, the subcommittee that writes federal funding for USDA NRCS conservation programs. From that seat, his FY25 and FY26 subcommittee marks reduced funding for the working-lands programs (NRCS-ACEP, EQIP, and CSP) below the administration's requested levels, even though Eastern Shore and Harford family farmers rely on those programs for easements and cover-crop assistance. In 2021 he voted against the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that put \$238 million into the Chesapeake Bay Program. In 2020 he opposed permanent full funding for LWCF (the Great American Outdoors Act), the program that builds boat ramps, fishing piers, and wildlife management areas across the district. His lifetime League of Conservation Voters score is 2 percent. His 2025 score is zero.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

A Kent County farmer with a 100-acre family farm has been on the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) easement waiting list for two years. In exchange for a permanent restriction keeping the property in agriculture, the easement would pay her roughly the development value of the land, giving her capital while keeping a working farm next to

her neighbors' working farms. The Eastern Shore Land Conservancy and the county ag preservation office have her application scored and ready to fund.

What's missing is the funding. Maryland Program Open Space, which feeds the easement programs, just lost \$100 million over four years. The Eastern Shore is at the front of the queue because the development pressure is highest here, but the queue is now longer than the available money will reach. If federal NRCS-ACEP cost-share is reduced (as the FY26 administration budget proposes), her easement either does not get funded or gets pushed back another two years. By then her neighbors have sold to a developer. The same pattern is repeating across Caroline, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Wicomico, Worcester, and Harford counties. Federal funding is the difference between a permanently working Eastern Shore (and the rest of the district) and one that has been carved into half-acre lots a decade from now.

MY TAKE

Conservation programs in MD-01 fund things rural voters depend on regardless of party: boat ramps, duck blinds, farm easements, the federal cost-share that keeps farms in the family. Other rural Republicans in Congress vote for these programs. Andy Harris doesn't. Defending them is baseline work for any representative of MD-01.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

On the BIL Chesapeake Bay funding cliff:

- Cosponsor and push for full reauthorization of the BIL Chesapeake Bay Program funding stream before the September 30, 2026 cliff. A ramp-down or extension is acceptable as a fallback.
- Defend the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program baseline appropriation in every appropriations cycle.

On National Wildlife Refuges:

- Defend U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service appropriations. Restore staffing at the Chesapeake Marshlands NWR Complex, with on-site staff returned to Eastern Neck, Martin, and Susquehanna.
- Defend NPS appropriations for Assateague Island National Seashore so the seashore is fully staffed during peak season.
- Cosponsor legislation that protects refuge and seashore staffing levels from administrative attrition.

On working lands easements:

- Defend Farm Bill Title II conservation programs (CRP, EQIP, CSP, ACEP) in every appropriations cycle.
- Push to fully fund the NRCS-ACEP queue. The federal cost-share is what makes Maryland Rural Legacy and MALPF easements close on the Eastern Shore.
- Defend the USDA Forest Legacy Program. Maryland uses it for forest easements in the Pocomoke, Nanticoke, and Choptank watersheds.

On public lands and access:

- Cosponsor full and permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Block any further administrative diversion of LWCF dollars away from conservation and recreation.
- Defend Pittman-Robertson (Wildlife Restoration) and Dingell-Johnson (Sport Fish Restoration) excise tax dollars. These are hunter-and-angler dollars that build boat ramps, fishing piers, and wildlife management areas across MD-01.
- Defend the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. Gateway sites in Chestertown, Cambridge, Tilghman, and Crisfield are MD-01 economic anchors.

On the blue catfish processing fight:

- Cosponsor the MAWS Act in the Senate to keep it moving toward enactment. The pet food and animal feed processing channel reduces some of the immediate harvest backlog.
- Cosponsor separate legislation to transfer blue catfish (Siluriformes) inspection from USDA back to FDA. Watermen and processors have been asking for this fix; the pet food channel alone does not open the human consumption market that drives the harvest pressure that protects native species.

On wildlife and habitat:

- Defend U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service migratory bird programs. The Eastern Shore is the spine of the Atlantic Flyway between Delaware Bay and the Carolinas.
- Defend NOAA Habitat Conservation funding. Fund Audubon's "Marshes for Tomorrow" and similar salt marsh restoration work that responds to the Eastern Shore marsh drowning crisis.
- Defend the Endangered Species Act against narrowing. The Northeastern Beach Tiger Beetle, Bog Turtle, Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon, and Red Knot all have MD-01 habitat.

On Baltimore County URDL preservation:

- Direct NRCS-ACEP-ALE federal cost-share funding to Baltimore County ag easements within the URDL preservation areas.
- Direct USDA Forest Legacy funding to Baltimore County forest easements (relevant to the North County forests).
- Direct LWCF state-side grants to parks and recreation acquisitions inside the URDL.

In the District

A district office liaison for conservation issues, working with the partner stack: Maryland League of Conservation Voters, Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, Lower Shore Land Trust (Salisbury), Chesapeake Conservancy, Audubon Maryland-DC, Sierra Club Lower Eastern Shore Group, Harford Land Trust, the Baltimore County Land Trust Coalition, and Valleys Planning Council. The liaison helps landowners navigate NRCS, MALPF, MARBIDCO Next Generation Farmland Acquisition, and Rural Legacy applications, and tracks federal grant opportunities for MD-01 land trusts.

A standing relationship with the Friends of Blackwater NWR, the Friends of Eastern Neck NWR, and similar refuge volunteer groups. These groups have been carrying more of the on-site work as paid staff vacancies have grown.

Outreach to hunter and angler organizations across MD-01 (Ducks Unlimited, the Maryland chapter of Trout Unlimited, the Maryland Sportsmen's Association, county-level hunting and fishing clubs). Federal conservation funding includes the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson excise taxes paid on guns, ammunition, fishing rods, and outboard motors. That money builds the boat ramps, fishing piers, and wildlife management areas these groups use. Defending federal conservation funding is defending hunter and angler funding.

Annual public report on federal conservation funding flowing into MD-01 by program and county (NRCS, USFWS, NPS, NOAA, USDA Forest Legacy). Posted online.

Through Oversight

Public letters to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on staffing levels at the Chesapeake Marshlands NWR Complex, with specific reference to Eastern Neck, Martin, and Susquehanna.

Public letters to the National Park Service on Assateague Island National Seashore staffing and visitor services.

Demand committee hearings on the FY26 Interior-Environment Appropriations bill, with specific reference to the LWCF reduction proposal.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources on federal conservation grant flow to Maryland and on enforcement of federal land-management obligations.

THE HONEST PART

Reauthorizing the BIL Chesapeake Bay funding before September 30, 2026 requires either a clean reauthorization vote (unlikely in the current Congress) or attaching the Bay funding to the broader surface transportation reauthorization package (more realistic but politically complicated). Either way the fight is now, in this Congress.

National Wildlife Refuge staffing reductions were administrative actions. Reversing them requires either administrative cooperation or sustained appropriations pressure tied to specific staffing levels. Federal courts have intervened on probationary terminations but have not addressed the broader staffing reductions.

Maryland Program Open Space cuts are state decisions, and a federal representative cannot reverse them by fiat. What federal legislation can do is fully fund the NRCS-ACEP cost-share so that fewer state dollars are needed per easement, which lets Maryland's reduced POS budget reach more acres.

The MAWS Act has passed the House. Senate passage is plausible but not guaranteed. Moving blue catfish inspection from USDA back to FDA is a separate fight that has not yet passed; it faces opposition from the catfish farming lobby that wanted the USDA inspection regime in the first place. That is the harder fight.

LWCF permanent funding (the Great American Outdoors Act, signed 2020) is being undermined administratively. Defending it has become an annual appropriations fight.

Conservation has a bipartisan coalition in normal times. With Andy Harris as the MD-01 vote, that coalition has not been available here. Part of the case to voters is that this is one of the few policy areas where they can have a representative who builds the kind of cross-party coalitions other rural members of Congress already build on conservation.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL / Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act), Public Law 117-58, 2021. Chesapeake Bay Program \$238M over five years. Authorization expires September 30, 2026.
- MAWS Act (Mitigation Action and Watermen Support Act, H.R. 4294). Sponsors: Rep. Sarah Elfreth (D-MD-03), Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA-01). Passed House March 16, 2026. Now in Senate.
- Blue catfish FDA inspection transfer legislation (multiple bills across recent Congresses). To be confirmed and cosponsored.
- Land and Water Conservation Fund permanent funding (Great American Outdoors Act, P.L. 116-152, signed 2020). Defense legislation to block administrative diversion.
- Farm Bill Title II conservation programs (CRP, EQIP, CSP, ACEP) reauthorization. Current extension through September 30, 2026.
- USDA Forest Legacy Program (annual appropriations).
- Endangered Species Act defense legislation (multiple bills against narrowing).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- EPA Chesapeake Bay Program. Federal coordination of Bay restoration across MD, VA, PA, DE, WV, NY, DC.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wildlife Refuge System.
- National Park Service.
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP-ALE for ag, ACEP-WRE for wetlands), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).
- USDA Forest Service: Forest Legacy Program.
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).
- Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. § 669 et seq.).
- Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. § 777 et seq.).
- Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (Duck Stamp).
- Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. § 1531 et seq.).

MARYLAND AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- Maryland Program Open Space (POS). 0.5% real estate transfer tax.
- Maryland Rural Legacy Program. Created 1997.
- Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF). Created 1977.
- MARBIDCO Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program.
- Maryland Bay Restoration Fund (BRF). Septic-tier 60% septic upgrades / 40% cover crops. Sunsets 2030 absent legislative action.
- Baltimore County Urban-Rural Demarcation Line (URDL). Established 1967.

SOURCES

- LCV Member of Congress page, Andy Harris: lcv.org/moc/andy-harris
- Funding Landscape on IJJA cliff: fundinglandscape.com/answers/infrastructure-ijja-funding-2026
- Transportation For America on IJJA reauthorization: t4america.org
- EPA Chesapeake Bay Program: epa.gov/chesapeake-bay-program-cbp
- Friends of Blackwater NWR on staff cuts: friendsofblackwater.org/staff-cuts-blackwater-nwr
- Star Democrat on Eastern Neck staffing: stardem.com

- Harford Land Trust on POS cuts: harfordlandtrust.org/program-open-space-2026
- Eastern Shore Land Conservancy on POS cuts: eslc.org/md-budget-cuts-target-land-conservation
- Maryland Department of the Environment Bay Restoration Fund: mde.maryland.gov/programs/water/bayrestorationfund
- Maryland DNR Rural Legacy Program: dnr.maryland.gov/land/Pages/Rural-Legacy
- Maryland Department of Agriculture, MALPF: mda.maryland.gov/Pages/malpf
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation on blue catfish inspection: cbf.org/blogs/save-the-bay/nows-the-time-to-correct-blue-catfish-policy
- Elfreth press release on MAWS Act House passage: elfreth.house.gov
- Bay Journal on pet food approach criticism: bayjournal.com
- Baltimore County Master Planning history: baltimorecountymd.gov/departments/planning/masterplanning/history

PARTNERS

Maryland League of Conservation Voters (MD LCV). Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC). Lower Shore Land Trust (LSLT, Salisbury area). Chesapeake Conservancy. Audubon Maryland-DC. Sierra Club Maryland Chapter, Lower Eastern Shore Group. Harford Land Trust. Baltimore County Land Trust Coalition. Valleys Planning Council. Friends of Blackwater NWR. Friends of Eastern Neck NWR. ShoreRivers (Choptank, Chester, Miles-Wye, Sassafras Riverkeepers). Maryland Conservation Council. Ducks Unlimited (Maryland chapters). Maryland Sportsmen's Association. Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Maryland Department of the Environment.

LIFE AND LIBERTY

Freedom is what makes us human. The right to make decisions about your own body. The right to love who you love. The right to live without fear of violence. The right to belong to the country you call home. Everyone in MD-01 deserves to have their freedoms defended.

IN THIS THEME

- 4.1 Your Body, Your Decision
- 4.2 LGBTQIA+ Lives, Lived Out Loud
- 4.3 An Immigration System That Actually Works
- 4.4 Gun Safety
- 4.5 Black History Is American History

BRIEF 4.1

Your Body, Your Decision

WHAT'S HAPPENING

On June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court decided *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, eliminating the federal constitutional right to abortion that had stood for forty-nine years. As of today, thirteen states have banned abortion outright. Six more have enacted early-gestation bans (typically at six weeks, which is before many people know they are pregnant) that function as effective bans for most patients. More than one in three American women of reproductive age, roughly 25 million women, now live under those laws.

Maryland is not one of those states. Federal elections, however, shape federal law. Federal law shapes whether Maryland women remain protected when they travel, when they receive prescriptions through the mail, and when the next administration tests how far it can stretch a 153-year-old statute.

The Comstock Act threat.

The 1873 anti-obscenity law banned the mailing of contraception, abortion-related materials, and "obscene" writings. *Roe* rendered it effectively dead in 1973. It was never repealed. Project 2025, the policy roadmap the current administration has been implementing since January 2025, explicitly identifies the Comstock Act as the mechanism by which a future administration could ban the mailing of mifepristone, misoprostol, abortion-related instruments, and even sexual health educational materials. Justices Alito and Thomas pressed Comstock-related questions during the March 26, 2024 oral arguments in *FDA v. Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine*. The administration has installed an FDA leadership team that has refused to defend mifepristone's safety record. Medication abortion accounts for roughly 63 percent of all abortions in the United States. If Comstock is enforced the way Project 2025's authors want, abortion is effectively banned nationwide, including in Maryland, without a single new law passing Congress.

The Hyde Amendment.

Since 1976, the Hyde Amendment has prohibited federal funding for abortion through Medicaid except in cases of rape, incest, or threat to the pregnant person's life. About 5.5 million women aged 15 to 49 enrolled in Medicaid live in states where abortion is legal but Medicaid will not cover it. Roughly 25 percent of women on Medicaid who seek abortion services are forced to carry their pregnancies to term because they cannot afford care. Hyde is a means-test on a constitutional right.

Contraception and IVF.

Justice Thomas's *Dobbs* concurrence explicitly invited the Supreme Court to reconsider *Griswold v. Connecticut*, the 1965 case that established the federal right to contraception. Fetal personhood laws have already created legal chaos for IVF clinics in Alabama and elsewhere. Couples have had treatment cycles cancelled, embryos frozen indefinitely, and clinics close. The same legal theory that ended *Roe* is being aimed at contraception and assisted reproductive technology next.

Women's health research.

American medical research has, for the entirety of its history, used the male body as the default. Women were systematically excluded from clinical trials until the 1993 NIH Revitalization Act required their inclusion. Even after that, the gap is real. Endometriosis, which affects roughly one in ten women, takes an average of seven to ten years to diagnose. Maternal cardiovascular disease, menopause biology, perimenopause, autoimmune disorders, and uterine fibroids (which disproportionately affect Black women) are all dramatically under-researched. The current administration has cut NIH staffing, terminated billions in research grants, and politicized which conditions are deemed acceptable to study.

Documented harms since Dobbs.

Two women in Georgia, Amber Nicole Thurman and Candi Miller, died from delayed care that the state's own maternal mortality review committee concluded was preventable. Women in Texas, Idaho, and Georgia have been turned away from emergency rooms while miscarrying. Doctors in ban states have hesitated to treat ectopic pregnancies for fear of prosecution. Each of these is a death certificate.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

Imagine a woman in Easton who, eight weeks into a pregnancy with significant medical complications, decides with her doctor that medication abortion is the right path. Her doctor mails her the mifepristone. Under current legal interpretation, that is lawful and routine. Under a Project 2025 enforcement of the Comstock Act, the same mailing becomes a federal crime. The woman in Easton goes from having access to medication abortion to driving to a clinic in Annapolis, or further, for a procedure that previously could be done at home. The state has not changed its laws. The federal government has changed how the existing 1873 statute is enforced. Repeal Comstock and that scenario disappears. Leave it on the books and Maryland's protections become contingent on which administration is in office.

MY TAKE

Reasonable people should not disagree about whether women should bleed out in waiting rooms.

OUR PLAN***In Congress*****Restore Roe by statute.**

- Cosponsor and vote yes on the Women's Health Protection Act (H.R. 12, sponsor: Rep. Judy Chu; S. 2150, sponsor: Sen. Tammy Baldwin). Reintroduced in the 119th Congress on June 24, 2025, the third anniversary of Dobbs. The bill creates a statutory right for healthcare providers to provide abortion care, and a statutory right for patients to receive it, free from medically unnecessary state restrictions.

Repeal Comstock.

- Cosponsor and vote yes on the Stop Comstock Act (S. 951, Sens. Cortez Masto, Smith, Warren; H.R. 2029, Rep. Becca Balint). Repeal the language in 18 U.S.C. §§ 1461 and 1462 that an anti-abortion administration could exploit.
- Until repeal, push the Department of Justice to maintain the Office of Legal Counsel position that Comstock applies only to unlawful abortions and cannot be enforced against the mailing of medications with lawful uses.
- Defend the FDA approval of mifepristone. More than two decades of clinical safety data say what the administration is trying to relitigate.

Repeal Hyde.

- Cosponsor the EACH Act (Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance, S. 2377, 119th Congress). Repeals the Hyde Amendment and prohibits federal restrictions on abortion coverage in private insurance and federal employee health plans.
- Defend Title X family planning funding.
- Defend Planned Parenthood. Vote against H.R. 599 and any other legislation defunding it. Planned Parenthood is, for many people in MD-01, the closest provider of cancer screenings, STI testing, contraception, and routine reproductive care.

Protect contraception and IVF.

- Cosponsor the Right to Contraception Act (S. 422 / H.R. 999).
- Cosponsor the Right to IVF Act / Protect IVF Act (S. 2035). Federal protection for assisted reproductive technology, including for the hundreds of thousands of military and veteran families who use IVF.
- Defend the ACA's no-cost contraception requirement against ongoing administrative narrowing.

Defend the right to travel and the providers in MD.

- Cosponsor the Freedom to Travel for Health Care Act. States cannot be allowed to criminalize their residents for crossing state lines for legal medical care.
- Cosponsor shield-law legislation protecting Maryland providers from out-of-state subpoenas, extradition demands, and license retaliation when they treat patients from ban states.

Rebuild NIH and women's health research.

- Vote against and work to reverse NIH cuts. Defend grant pipelines.
- Permanently fund the NIH Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) and dramatically increase its budget. Statutorily protect it from administrative defunding.
- Build a federal research portfolio on understudied women's health conditions: endometriosis, PCOS, adenomyosis, uterine fibroids, maternal cardiovascular disease, menopause, perimenopause, pelvic floor disorders, long COVID, autoimmune disease.
- Require sex-disaggregated data in every federally funded clinical trial, with statutory enforcement.

In the District

A district office liaison for reproductive healthcare access, working with Maryland Planned Parenthood, the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault, and the Maryland chapter of NARAL/Reproductive Freedom for All. Helps constituents navigate Medicaid, ACA marketplace contraception coverage, and access issues.

A patient ombudsman function for women turned away from MD-01 emergency departments during pregnancy complications, miscarriages, or ectopic pregnancies. Coordinates with HHS Office for Civil Rights and the Maryland Attorney General on EMTALA enforcement (cross-reference Brief 2.3).

Listening sessions across MD-01 counties on maternal health, fertility access, and reproductive care, paired with the maternal health convenings in Brief 2.1.

Through Oversight

Public letters to the FDA on the mifepristone safety record and any administrative effort to relitigate it.

Demand committee hearings on Project 2025 implementation related to reproductive rights and the Comstock Act.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General on enforcement of state shield laws and resistance to out-of-state subpoenas.

Annual public report from the district office on reproductive healthcare access in MD-01.

THE HONEST PART

The Women's Health Protection Act, the Stop Comstock Act, and the EACH Act all need a Senate path that does not currently exist. Until that changes, the work is keeping the legislation alive, defending the administrative interpretations that protect access, and limiting damage from FDA, DOJ, and HHS rollback.

The right to contraception and the right to IVF are similar. Federal statute is the durable answer. Until then, state-level protections and litigation are the firewall.

Repealing Comstock is the most time-sensitive piece. If the administration uses the 1873 law to ban mifepristone mailing, Maryland's existing protections become contingent overnight. The work is keeping that interpretation off the books.

The maternal mortality and women's health research portfolios depend on appropriations and on the next NIH director. Federal pressure helps. Administrative cooperation matters more.

For the voter who has always called themselves pro-life: I am not asking you to change your view on the morality of abortion. I am asking you to look at what the post-Dobbs reality has produced and ask whether the policy you supported is doing what you wanted it to do. Women are dying in hospital parking lots. That is not what most pro-life voters wanted.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Women's Health Protection Act (H.R. 12, Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA); S. 2150, Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)). Reintroduced June 24, 2025.

- Stop Comstock Act (S. 951, Sens. Cortez Masto, Smith, Warren; H.R. 2029, Rep. Becca Balint).
- EACH Act, Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance (S. 2377, 119th Congress).
- Right to Contraception Act (S. 422 / H.R. 999).
- Right to IVF Act / Protect IVF Act (S. 2035).
- Freedom to Travel for Health Care Act.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Comstock Act (18 U.S.C. §§ 1461 and 1462). 1873.
- Hyde Amendment (1976, annual appropriations rider).
- NIH Revitalization Act of 1993.
- NIH Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH).

COURT CASES

- Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113 (1973). Overturned 2022.
- Planned Parenthood v. Casey, 505 U.S. 833 (1992). Overturned 2022.
- Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, 597 U.S. 215 (2022).
- Griswold v. Connecticut, 381 U.S. 479 (1965). Right to contraception. Currently invited to be reconsidered (Justice Thomas, Dobbs concurrence).

SOURCES

- CDC reproductive health
- Guttmacher Institute on post-Dobbs landscape
- KFF on medication abortion and the Comstock Act
- Project 2025 (Mandate for Leadership), policy roadmap
- Georgia maternal mortality review committee findings on Amber Nicole Thurman and Candi Miller cases

PARTNERS

Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Reproductive Freedom for All. Center for Reproductive Rights. ACLU Reproductive Freedom Project. National Women's Law Center. Black Mamas Matter Alliance. In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda. SisterSong. Physicians for Reproductive Health. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault. Maryland chapter of NARAL/Reproductive Freedom for All.

BRIEF 4.2

LGBTQIA+ Lives, Lived Out Loud

WHAT'S HAPPENING

There is no federal law that explicitly protects LGBTQIA+ Americans from discrimination in housing, public accommodations, federally funded programs, education, credit, or jury service. The Supreme Court's 2020 decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County* held that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. That ruling covers employment, and only employment, and only for as long as the current Court continues to honor it. Twenty-nine states still lack comprehensive nondiscrimination protections. In the patchwork that remains, an LGBTQIA+ American can be lawfully evicted, denied a loan, refused service at a restaurant, or turned away from a federally funded shelter in much of the country.

Active rollback since January 2025.

Executive orders have restricted access to gender-affirming care for people of all ages, restricted transgender Americans from updating federal identity documents, restricted transgender youth from school sports, censored classrooms, and rolled back nondiscrimination protections in healthcare. Anti-LGBTQ+ legislation passed in fourteen states in 2024 alone. Republican-aligned campaigns and outside groups spent approximately \$215 million on anti-trans political ads in the 2024 election cycle. The Senate Leadership Fund subset alone was over \$80 million.

Marriage equality is contingent.

On November 10, 2025, the Supreme Court denied certiorari in *Davis v. Ermold*, the first formal post-Dobbs petition asking the Court to overturn *Obergefell v. Hodges*. That is a relief, not a guarantee. Justice Thomas's 2022 Dobbs concurrence explicitly invited challenges to *Obergefell*, *Lawrence*, and *Griswold*. At least nine state legislatures have considered resolutions in 2025 urging the Court to overturn marriage equality. The Respect for Marriage Act, signed by President Biden in 2022, requires interstate recognition of valid marriages and protects existing marriages, but does not require states to issue new same-sex marriage licenses if *Obergefell* falls. Thirty-five states still have unenforced statutory or constitutional bans on the books.

The Equal Rights Amendment is in legal limbo.

President Biden declared on January 17, 2025 that the ERA is the 28th Amendment to the Constitution. The National Archivist did not certify and publish it. Days later, the Biden statement was removed from the White House website. Joint resolutions affirming the ERA's validity have been introduced in both chambers of Congress.

Gender-affirming care is older than the politics around it.

Testosterone replacement therapy for cisgender men with low T, estrogen for cisgender women in menopause, breast augmentation and reduction surgery, hair-loss treatment, and voice therapy are all forms of gender-affirming care. The category is medically broad, well-established, and decades old. Every major medical organization in the United States, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Endocrine Society, and the World

Professional Association for Transgender Health, supports gender-affirming care for transgender adults and adolescents on the basis of decades of clinical evidence. Federal policy has begun treating the same medication differently depending on the patient's identity.

Violence against Black transgender women is the part of this brief that does not get spoken about enough.

The Human Rights Campaign has documented at least 399 transgender and gender-nonconforming Americans killed in fatal violence since 2013. Roughly 70 percent were people of color. Nearly 60 percent were Black transgender women. Black trans women are killed, on average, five years younger than non-Black trans women. The most common weapon is firearms, the most common suspect is an intimate partner, and the most common legal outcome is no charge, no conviction, and a misgendered headline. Between 2013 and October 2024, the FBI recorded only 16 fatal hate crimes against trans and gender-expansive people, a tiny fraction of the documented deaths, because of how narrowly hate crimes are statutorily defined and reported.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

Consider a forty-year-old man in Aberdeen on testosterone replacement therapy. His levels dropped, his doctor recommended TRT, and he has been on it for two years. His prescription is gender-affirming care. The same prescription, written for a transgender man with the same medical indication, is currently described in Project 2025 as a "danger to children" and slated for federal restriction. If federal law starts treating the same medication differently depending on the patient's identity, the man in Aberdeen is one administrative rule change away from his doctor having to ask whether his TRT prescription falls under the new restrictions. The decision then rests on politics rather than medicine.

MY TAKE

The federal government does not get to decide whose family counts or whose body is real. The Equality Act and the other bills in this brief apply the civil rights framework that already exists for race, religion, sex, and national origin to LGBTQIA+ Americans.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Pass the Equality Act.

- Cosponsor and vote yes on the Equality Act (H.R. 15, Rep. Mark Takano; S. 1503, Sens. Merkley, Baldwin, Booker). Reintroduced in the 119th Congress on April 29, 2025. Amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, and other federal civil rights statutes to explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics in employment, housing, public accommodations, federally funded programs, education, credit, and jury service.

- Defend the Bostock-derived interpretation at federal agencies (EEOC, HUD, Department of Education, HHS) until the Equality Act passes.

Publish the Equal Rights Amendment.

- Cosponsor and vote yes on the joint resolutions introduced in March 2025 in both chambers affirming that the ERA is validly the 28th Amendment to the Constitution. As the Supreme Court held in *Coleman v. Miller* (1939), it is for Congress to determine when an amendment has been properly ratified.
- Push for archivist certification using congressional oversight authority over the National Archives.

Defend marriage equality.

- Defend the Respect for Marriage Act (Public Law 117-228, signed December 2022) against any future repeal effort.
- Cosponsor legislation strengthening the RFMA, including provisions requiring states to issue new same-sex marriage licenses regardless of Obergefell's status.
- Cosponsor a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the right to marry regardless of sex or sexual orientation. Statute is faster; an amendment is more durable. Both belong on the table.

Protect gender-affirming care.

- Vote against federal restrictions on gender-affirming care.
- Cosponsor legislation explicitly protecting it under federal law for transgender adults and adolescents.
- Defend the Section 1557 ACA nondiscrimination protections that the current administration has rolled back (cross-reference Brief 2.3).
- Maintain coverage under Medicare, Medicaid, the VA, and federal employee health plans.
- Cosponsor shield-law legislation protecting Maryland healthcare providers from out-of-state legal action when they provide gender-affirming care to patients from states that have banned it.

End the violence against Black transgender women.

- Statutorily require FBI Uniform Crime Reporting and the National Violent Death Reporting System to track gender identity for both victims and suspects in violent crime data.
- Push the FBI and DOJ to require accurate gender identity reporting in homicide data, end the practice of misgendering victims in federal databases, and improve coordination with local law enforcement.
- Defend and expand the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act's gender identity coverage. Fully fund DOJ Civil Rights Division capacity to prosecute.
- Cosponsor federal legislation eliminating the use of "trans panic" and "gay panic" defenses in federal homicide and assault prosecutions. About a third of states still allow these defenses; federal action would set a national floor.
- Direct federal grants to community-based violence prevention led by Black trans women and other directly affected communities.

Other priorities.

- Restore the ability for transgender and nonbinary Americans to update passports, Social Security records, and federal IDs accurately, including with an X gender marker option.
- Defend Department of Education authority to enforce Title IX protections for LGBTQ+ students.
- Cosponsor federal legislation banning conversion therapy for minors and prohibiting federal funds for conversion therapy at any age.
- Defend Runaway and Homeless Youth Act funding and HUD homeless assistance for the disproportionately LGBTQ+ youth homeless population.
- Defend the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline LGBTQI+ Press 3 service, which the administration has attempted to defund.
- Restore sexual orientation and gender identity questions to federal surveys (Census ACS, Household Pulse, BRFSS, NSFG).

In the District

A district office liaison for LGBTQIA+ constituents on issues including healthcare access, federal identity documents, housing discrimination, and hate crimes reporting. Works with Maryland LGBTQ+ Democrats, FreeState Justice, and the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights.

A patient ombudsman function for transgender constituents denied gender-affirming care or experiencing discrimination in MD-01 healthcare settings (cross-reference Brief 2.3).

Coordination with Maryland's domestic violence advocacy network on prevention work directed to Black trans women and other vulnerable populations.

Through Oversight

Public letters to EEOC, HUD, Department of Education, and HHS on Bostock-derived interpretation maintenance.

Demand committee hearings on Project 2025 implementation related to LGBTQIA+ rollback, including gender-affirming care restrictions and federal identity document changes.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General on civil rights complaint patterns affecting LGBTQIA+ Marylanders.

THE HONEST PART

The Equality Act has been introduced repeatedly and not passed. It needs a Senate path that does not currently exist. Until that changes, the work is defending the Bostock-derived interpretations at federal agencies and limiting damage from rollback.

The ERA certification fight is a constitutional and political struggle. The work is keeping the joint resolutions alive and making the case for archivist certification.

Marriage equality at the constitutional level depends on the Supreme Court. The *Davis v. Ermold* cert denial was a relief but not a guarantee. The work is the RFMA defense and the constitutional amendment groundwork.

Gender-affirming care protections at the federal level depend on administrative posture. Maryland-level shield laws and provider protections matter most while federal policy is hostile.

The violence against Black trans women has a federal data problem and a federal funding problem. Both are addressable with legislation, but the deeper drivers are housing, employment, and healthcare access patterns that require the broader Equality Act and the broader civil rights framework.

For the voter just starting to think about this: the Equality Act asks for the same protections that already exist for race, religion, sex, and national origin in federal civil rights law. Gender-affirming care is medicine that has existed for decades and that cisgender people use too. None of this requires any religion to change its teachings or any clergy to perform any ceremony. It prohibits discrimination by entities that take federal money. We have done this before with race and with sex. We can do it again.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Equality Act (H.R. 15, Rep. Mark Takano (D-CA); S. 1503, Sens. Merkley (D-OR), Baldwin (D-WI), Booker (D-NJ)). Reintroduced April 29, 2025.
- Joint Resolution Affirming the ERA (H.J.Res. 80 / S.J.Res. 38, introduced March 2025).
- Respect for Marriage Act (Public Law 117-228, December 13, 2022).
- Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act (Public Law 111-84, 2009).
- LGBTQ+ Panic Defense Prohibition Act (H.R. 4197 / S. 2201).
- Therapeutic Fraud Prevention Act / conversion therapy ban (H.R. 3243 / S. 1663).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq., Title VII).
- Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. § 3601 et seq.).
- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.
- Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. § 18116) (cross-reference Brief 2.3).

COURT CASES

- *Bostock v. Clayton County*, 590 U.S. ____ (2020). Title VII covers sexual orientation and gender identity in employment.
- *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 576 U.S. 644 (2015). Right to marriage equality.
- *Davis v. Ermold* (cert denied November 10, 2025).
- *Coleman v. Miller*, 307 U.S. 433 (1939). Congress determines amendment ratification validity.
- *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, 597 U.S. 215 (2022). Justice Thomas concurrence inviting challenges to *Obergefell*, *Lawrence*, *Griswold*.

SOURCES

- Human Rights Campaign tracking of fatal violence against transgender and gender-nonconforming people

- HHS Office for Civil Rights
- National Archives on the ERA
- ACLU LGBTQ+ project

PARTNERS

Human Rights Campaign. GLAAD. GLSEN. Lambda Legal. ACLU LGBTQ+ Project. National Center for Transgender Equality. Advocates for Trans Equality. National Black Justice Coalition. Marsha P. Johnson Institute. The Trevor Project. PFLAG. Maryland LGBTQ+ Democrats. FreeState Justice.

BRIEF 4.3

An Immigration System That Actually Works

WHAT'S HAPPENING

America's immigration system was broken long before ICE existed. The Department of Homeland Security was created in 2003. The current immigration court backlog exceeds three million cases. Asylum hearings are scheduled years out. Visa categories are oversubscribed by orders of magnitude. The H-2A and H-2B agricultural and seasonal worker programs are bureaucratic mazes that hurt MD-01 farmers, watermen, crab houses, and Ocean City employers every season. Deportation enforcement, no matter how brutal, does not fix any of that.

The current administration has chosen brutality over reform. ICE has run raids, profiled by race, and held people in detention conditions that have produced documented abuse, sexual assault allegations, and deaths in custody. The administration has removed people without hearings, has begun sending people to third countries (including El Salvador and Rwanda) that the United States has not historically returned people to, and has rolled back sensitive-locations protections so that ICE enforcement can now happen at schools, churches, hospitals, and courthouses.

Deportation, as a function of an immigration system, is not inherently illegitimate. The how and the why determine whether it is lawful or whether it is cruelty in a uniform. What is happening now is the latter.

The fix is not complicated, but it is layered. It requires hiring more adjudicators, moving the immigration courts out of the Department of Justice, modernizing USCIS so green card and work authorization renewals do not take years, passing comprehensive reform that includes a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers, TPS holders, farmworkers, and long-resident undocumented immigrants, and reforming H-2A and H-2B for the employers who depend on the program.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

Consider a Wicomico County crab house on the Lower Shore. Each summer, the operator applies for H-2B visas to bring in workers, mostly from Mexico, who pick crabs through the season. The H-2B cap is set nationally and is wildly oversubscribed. The applications are filed months in advance. The outcomes vary year to year: visas through in time and the season opens, visas late and product spoils, or visas denied entirely and the crab house cannot operate. The workers who do arrive are paid wages that the federal Department of Labor sets through a formula that has not kept up with the cost of living. The result is that the owner pays more for inputs while getting fewer workers, the workers are paid less than they would be in a well-functioning system, and the federal program fails everyone in the chain. Eastern Shore poultry processors and Ocean City seasonal employers tell variations of the same story.

That crab house cannot fix this on its own. Federal action can.

MY TAKE

A working immigration system is fair to the workers who come, the employers who hire them, and the citizens whose tax dollars pay for enforcement. The current system is fair to none of them, because the administration has substituted brutality for actual policy.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

End the abuses now.

- Cosponsor legislation requiring body cameras for ICE field agents, independent inspector-general oversight of detention facilities, and criminal accountability for officers who commit assault, sexual abuse, or homicide. Administrative discipline is not enough.
- Cosponsor legislation ending ICE detention contracts with for-profit prison companies (GEO Group, CoreCivic). The detention abuse problem is structurally tied to private contracting.
- Restore federal sensitive-locations protections preventing ICE enforcement at schools, churches, hospitals, and courthouses.
- Cosponsor legislation ending the practice of removing people without hearings, restoring access to counsel and language access in detention, and ending third-country removals.

Build a system that actually works.

- Cosponsor and fight for funding to double the immigration judge corps and triple asylum officer staffing. Set a defined timeframe for clearing the existing backlog.
- Cosponsor the Real Courts, Rule of Law Act (H.R. 7836). Moves the immigration courts out of the Department of Justice and into an independent Article I court structure. Adjudication should not sit under prosecutorial control.
- Push USCIS modernization, including fee reform, processing-time accountability, and statutory deadlines for green card, naturalization, and work authorization renewals.

Pass comprehensive reform.

- Cosponsor legislation creating a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers, TPS holders, farmworkers, and long-resident undocumented immigrants who have built lives in this country. The American Dream and Promise Act (H.R. 1589) and the U.S. Citizenship Act framework are starting points.
- Pair pathway legislation with smart border investment focused on technology and personnel rather than wall construction.

Fix H-2A and H-2B for MD-01 employers.

- Cosponsor reform of the H-2A and H-2B programs that protects worker wages and conditions and gives Eastern Shore poultry processors, watermen, crab houses, and Ocean City seasonal employers a predictable, fair, and timely process.

- Push Department of Labor reform of the prevailing wage formula for H-2B workers.

In the District

A district office liaison for immigration constituent service, working with CASA, the Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition (CAIR Coalition), Maryland Latinos Unidos, and the ACLU of Maryland.

A specific outreach to Eastern Shore employers (poultry processors, watermen, crab houses, Ocean City seasonal businesses) on H-2A and H-2B navigation, paired with worker-side outreach on rights and conditions.

A district office function for tracking ICE enforcement activity in MD-01, coordinating with local law enforcement and the Maryland Attorney General on incidents that violate sensitive-locations protections or due process.

Coordination with local school districts, hospitals, and faith communities on protocols for protecting students, patients, and congregants from federal enforcement actions.

Through Oversight

Public letters to DHS Office of Inspector General on documented patterns of abuse in ICE custody.

Demand committee hearings on third-country removals, detention deaths, and ICE accountability.

Public letters to the Department of Labor on H-2B prevailing wage methodology and Eastern Shore employer impacts.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General on any ICE enforcement action that may have violated state or federal law.

THE HONEST PART

Comprehensive immigration reform has not passed in a generation. It needs a Senate path, presidential cooperation, and a House majority that wants it. None of that currently exists in alignment. Until it does, the work is preventing the worst, defending sensitive-locations protections at the administrative level, and keeping the legislation alive and ready.

The Article I immigration court restructuring is a real, achievable reform with bipartisan support in some quarters. It is the most viable single piece in the near term.

H-2A and H-2B reform is technically modest but politically tangled because organized labor, employer groups, and farmworker advocates all have interests. The MD-01 angle is to make the case for our specific employers and workers.

ICE accountability legislation has been introduced repeatedly. The work is keeping the pressure on the agency and using the appropriations process to condition funding on reform.

The bigger picture is that this country has not had a functional immigration system in three decades. Building one is a multi-Congress project. The work is starting it.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- ICE oversight legislation (body cameras, IG oversight, criminal accountability).
- Real Courts, Rule of Law Act (H.R. 7836). Article I immigration courts.
- American Dream and Promise Act (H.R. 1589). Pathway for Dreamers and TPS holders.
- U.S. Citizenship Act framework. Comprehensive reform.
- H-2A and H-2B reform legislation.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, as amended.
- DHS, USCIS, ICE, CBP authorities.
- Executive Office for Immigration Review (immigration courts under DOJ).

SOURCES

- Immigration court backlog data: trac.syr.edu/immigration
- DHS Office of Inspector General reports on detention conditions
- Department of Labor H-2B program
- USCIS processing times

PARTNERS

ACLU of Maryland. CAIR Coalition (Capital Area Immigrants' Rights). CASA. Maryland Latinos Unidos. National Immigration Law Center. Watermen and farmer associations on H-2 issues. Eastern Shore Crab Picker Coalition. Maryland Restaurant Association on Ocean City seasonal employment.

BRIEF 4.4

Gun Safety

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Maryland is one of the stronger states in the country on gun safety policy. The state has a permit-to-purchase requirement for handguns. A robust red flag law (Extreme Risk Protective Orders, also called ERPOs). A permit requirement for handgun-qualified concealed carry. Maryland's firearm death rate is among the lowest in the country, and the gap is not coincidence.

But state law only goes so far when federal law leaves loopholes: the gun show loophole, the boyfriend loophole, the lack of universal background checks, the expired federal assault weapons ban, and uneven enforcement of existing law.

There is also a sheriff problem. When individual sheriffs across Maryland publicly disparage red flag laws and signal their reluctance to enforce them, the law stops protecting the women, children, and families it was written for. Sheriff Jeffrey Gahler in Harford County has publicly questioned protective order filings and signaled reluctance to enforce ERPOs vigorously. That posture, from an elected sheriff, affects whether women in his jurisdiction file at all. Federal grant funding to sheriff's offices, including Byrne JAG and COPS Hiring Program funding, can carry conditions tied to enforcement of state-law protective orders. It currently does not.

The federal pieces that need to move:

- Universal background checks (the Bipartisan Background Checks Act).
- Permanent statutory closure of the boyfriend loophole.
- A federal red flag framework that incentivizes state adoption with proper due process.
- Federal grant conditions tied to enforcement of state protective orders.
- Reinstatement of the assault weapons ban with magazine limits.
- Federal incentives for safe storage and child access prevention statutes.
- Funded gun violence research at CDC and NIH.

Calling this "gun control" has been a deliberate misnaming. What is at stake is whether kids come home from school, whether a movie theater turns into a body count, and whether neighbors live with anxiety every time a teenager walks into a Walmart. The people who should not have guns should not have guns. Hunters, sport shooters, and lawful owners are not the target, and never have been.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

In Harford County, Sheriff Jeffrey Gahler has publicly questioned ERPO filings in his jurisdiction. ERPOs were written for a specific situation: a household where someone in crisis has access to a firearm and the people closest to them know the danger. The data from Maryland, including from Somerset County, shows ERPOs save lives, particularly in domestic violence

situations where law enforcement contact has already occurred. When a sheriff signals he will not aggressively enforce ERPOs, women in his jurisdiction calculate whether to file at all. The ones who do not file include women who are then killed by abusers who would have lost firearms access if the order had been issued. That is the cost of the sheriff's posture. Federal grant funding flowing to his department is one lever to change that calculation.

MY TAKE

We care about gun safety. Background checks and red flag laws make sure our kids come home from school and the person who has been abused lives to tell their story of survival. We want people alive and thriving. This is not a threat to your right to hunt or to protect yourself.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Close the easy loopholes.

- Cosponsor and vote yes on the Bipartisan Background Checks Act. Every gun sale, including private and gun-show sales, should require a background check.
- Cosponsor permanent statutory closure of the boyfriend loophole in firearms prohibitions for domestic abusers. The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022 made meaningful progress; statutory closure should be permanent and complete.
- Cosponsor a federal Extreme Risk Protective Order incentive framework, with safeguards for due process. Federal incentives for states to adopt and enforce red flag laws.
- Cosponsor legislation conditioning Byrne JAG and COPS Hiring Program funding on enforcement of state-law protective orders. A sheriff who refuses to enforce his state's protective order law should not receive federal funding to do so.

Beyond the loopholes.

- Cosponsor the Assault Weapons Ban and the Keep Americans Safe Act on high-capacity magazines. Maryland already has a state-level ban; federal law should match.
- Cosponsor federal incentives for state safe-storage laws and a federal child access prevention statute. Most school shootings involve a firearm taken from a home.
- Defend the post-Dickey Amendment funding for gun violence research at CDC and NIH. Expand it. Firearm injury is a public-health problem.
- Cosponsor reauthorization and expansion of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022.

In the District

A district office liaison for gun violence prevention work, including ERPO navigation assistance for constituents who need to file a protective order. Coordinate with the Maryland Coalition Against Gun Violence, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, and Moms Demand Action.

A specific accountability function on local sheriff enforcement of state protective orders. Public reporting on ERPO filings and outcomes by county. The data tells the story; sunlight is part of the change.

Site visits and listening sessions with hunters, sport shooters, and lawful gun owners across MD-01 counties. They are not the target of any of this legislation, and they should hear that directly.

Through Oversight

Public letters to the Department of Justice on Byrne JAG and COPS Hiring Program funding to sheriff's offices that have publicly opposed enforcement of state protective order laws.

Demand committee hearings on the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act implementation and the boyfriend loophole closure.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General on protective order enforcement patterns by county.

Annual public report on ERPO data in MD-01: filings, outcomes, and the cases where they prevented or could have prevented harm.

THE HONEST PART

The Bipartisan Background Checks Act has passed the House before and stalled in the Senate. It needs filibuster reform or a 60-vote bipartisan coalition. Until that exists, the work is keeping the legislation alive, building public pressure, and being ready when the political math changes.

The federal assault weapons ban expired in 2004 and has not been reinstated. Reinstatement faces the same Senate path problem. Maryland's state ban is the firewall.

The boyfriend loophole closure was achieved in part through the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. Permanent statutory closure has not happened. The work is keeping pressure on Congress to finish what the Act started.

The sheriff accountability piece is achievable through grant condition reform without major legislation. Byrne JAG and COPS Hiring Program funding flow through DOJ and can be conditioned by appropriations language. This is the most viable single piece in the near term.

Reasonable gun owners understand the difference between policy that targets them and policy that targets the people who should not have guns. That distinction has been deliberately blurred for political reasons. The work is keeping the actual policy clear.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Bipartisan Background Checks Act (H.R. 18). Universal background checks.
- Assault Weapons Ban (H.R. 3115 / S. 1531).
- Keep Americans Safe Act (H.R. 1674 / S. 803). High-capacity magazines.
- Federal Extreme Risk Protection Order Act (H.R. 7599) and Extreme Risk Protection Order Expansion Act (H.R. 4252 / S. 889).
- Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022 (Public Law 117-159) reauthorization and expansion.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Gun Control Act of 1968.
- Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993.
- Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022 (Public Law 117-159).
- Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) Program.
- COPS Hiring Program (Department of Justice).
- Dickey Amendment (1996 prohibition on CDC gun violence research; effectively lifted in 2018 appropriations).

SOURCES

- Maryland State Police firearm fatality data
- Maryland Coalition Against Gun Violence
- Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence
- Everytown for Gun Safety state scorecard

PARTNERS

Everytown for Gun Safety. Moms Demand Action. Maryland Coalition Against Gun Violence. Brady. Giffords. March for Our Lives. Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence. Maryland's domestic violence advocacy network.

BRIEF 4.5

Black History Is American History

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Black history on the Eastern Shore goes far beyond Tubman and Douglass. It runs through centuries of watermen, oystermen, sailmakers, packing-house workers, teachers, churches, schools, and entrepreneurs whose stories deserve federal investment in research, preservation, and economic revival. That history is being lost in real time.

The losses include cemeteries with broken markers, churches with no preservation funding, schoolhouses being torn down, and deeds and oral histories going un-collected. The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park is the anchor, and it is doing important work. Everything around it deserves the same care, and most of it is not getting it.

The work is not happening at scale because the federal funding programs that could support it have been narrow, slow, and underfunded. The relevant programs include National Park Service Underrepresented Communities grants, African American Civil Rights Network designations, Save America's Treasures grants, and the African American Burial Grounds Preservation Act funding. Each has been used to preserve a few sites; none has been used at the scale the Eastern Shore's Black history requires.

Volunteer-driven work has carried what federal funding has not. Vincent Leggett's Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation did extraordinary work for forty years before his passing in November 2024. Imani Black's Minorities in Aquaculture is recruiting a new generation. The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Watermen Project surveys sites across Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. These organizations cannot do this work at scale on volunteer time and small grants alone.

There is a heir-property dimension that connects directly to economic justice. Many Black families on the Shore have heir-property challenges (land passed down without clear title, vulnerable to forced partition sale, and excluded from USDA programs). Federal heir-property reforms are part of the same fight (cross-reference Brief 3.5).

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

Bellevue, in Talbot County, was settled in the aftermath of the Civil War and became a center of Black waterman life on the Eastern Shore (cross-reference Brief 3.4). Across MD-01, sites like it have been quietly disappearing: a Black church in Cambridge with a 130-year-old congregation watching its building decay; a Black cemetery near Salisbury with markers nobody has documented in a generation; a schoolhouse in Worcester County that taught generations of Black children and is now being torn down because the county does not have the budget to preserve it; a 1940 deed in a Somerset County courthouse basement, undigitized and at risk. National Park Service Underrepresented Communities grants, Save America's Treasures, and the African American Burial Grounds Preservation Act all exist for exactly this kind of work. None has been deployed to MD-01 at the scale it should be.

MY TAKE

Black history on the Eastern Shore is the main text of how this region became what it is. A federal representative who refuses to research, preserve, and fund that history is choosing to let it disappear.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Federal funding for Eastern Shore Black history sites.

- Pursue National Park Service Underrepresented Communities grants for sites across MD-01.
- Pursue African American Civil Rights Network designations for Eastern Shore civil rights and pre-civil-rights sites.
- Pursue Save America's Treasures grants for at-risk historic structures.
- Defend and expand funding for the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park.

Black cemetery preservation.

- Cosponsor the African American Burial Grounds Preservation Act funding. Ensure Shore-county cemeteries are mapped, protected, and supported.
- Push the National Park Service to prioritize Maryland Eastern Shore cemeteries in the network's site listings.

Heir-property work as part of the same fight.

- Cosponsor expansion of USDA's Heirs' Property Relending Program (cross-reference Brief 3.5). The program provides capital to clear title on heir property and lets Black families on the Shore access USDA programs they have been locked out of.
- Defend the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act federal implementation work.

Federal coordination across agencies.

- Push HUD, USDA, NPS, and the Smithsonian's NMAAHC to coordinate federal preservation work specifically for the Eastern Shore.
- Push the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) on collaboration with Eastern Shore institutions, including UMES, Salisbury University, the Reginald F. Lewis Museum, and local historical societies.

In the District

An Eastern Shore Black History Initiative through Community Project Funding. The initiative creates a coordinated multi-county research, preservation, and oral-history project, partnering with the Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation, the National Trust's Watermen Project, the Reginald F. Lewis Museum, the Smithsonian's NMAAHC, UMES, Salisbury University, and local historical societies in each MD-01 county.

A district office liaison for historic preservation grant navigation, helping local organizations across MD-01 apply for the federal programs that exist.

A specific outreach to Black churches, schools, and cemetery associations across MD-01 on preservation funding eligibility.

Coordination with the Caucus of African American Leaders Eastern Shore, the Talbot Historical Society, and similar county-level organizations.

Through Oversight

Public letters to the National Park Service on grant flow to Maryland Eastern Shore preservation work.

Demand committee hearings on African American Burial Grounds Preservation Act implementation, including grant flow and site listings.

Annual public report on federal historic preservation dollars flowing to MD-01 by county and by site type.

Coordinate with the Maryland Historical Trust and the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture on state-federal alignment.

THE HONEST PART

Federal historic preservation is a quiet appropriations fight. The programs exist. They are chronically underfunded. The work is keeping them funded and making sure MD-01 gets its share.

The African American Burial Grounds Preservation Act is bipartisan and modest in cost. The fight is making sure it gets used at the scale the Eastern Shore needs.

Heir-property reform connects directly to USDA programs and to the agriculture brief (3.5). Federal action exists; the work is making sure MD-01 families can access it.

This is a federal coordination, federal grant flow, and federal capacity-building fight rather than a sweeping legislative one. It happens through dozens of small actions across multiple agencies, and it is exactly the kind of work that does not happen unless a member of Congress treats it as a priority.

RECEIPTS

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- National Park Service Underrepresented Communities Grant Program.
- African American Civil Rights Network.
- Save America's Treasures.
- African American Burial Grounds Preservation Act (P.L. 117-328, Division DD, Section 643): program housed at NPS.
- USDA Heirs' Property Relending Program (cross-reference Brief 3.5).

SOURCES

- Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park
- Reginald F. Lewis Museum
- Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
- Maryland Historical Trust
- Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture

PARTNERS

Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation (legacy of Vincent Leggett). Minorities in Aquaculture (Imani Black). Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. National Trust for Historic Preservation Watermen Project. Reginald F. Lewis Museum. Smithsonian NMAAHC. Talbot Historical Society. Caucus of African American Leaders Eastern Shore. UMES. Salisbury University. Local historical societies in each MD-01 county.

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Everyone in MD-01 should be able to live a good life right here. That means a place to live, schools that work, a job that pays enough to stay, and food on the table. In a country this rich, they should be attainable. This part of the plan is about how MD-01 communities stay alive.

IN THIS THEME

5.1 Schools That Work

5.2 Towns Worth Staying In

5.3 Real Jobs Here, Not Just Anywhere

5.4 Help for Small and Black-Owned Businesses

5.5 Get Where You're Going

5.6 Houses People Can Live In

BRIEF 5.1

Schools That Work

WHAT'S HAPPENING

On March 20, 2025, the President signed an executive order directing Secretary Linda McMahon to begin closing the U.S. Department of Education. While Congress alone can abolish the agency, the administration has gutted it from within: staff cut from roughly 4,100 to about 2,200; nearly \$900 million in research contracts cancelled; the \$1.7 trillion student loan portfolio moved toward Treasury; civil rights investigations slowed to a near-halt; and at least 118 programs handed off to other federal agencies through interagency agreements. Andy Harris voted with the administration on these moves at every turn.

Maryland's Blueprint salary gap.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future imposes a minimum teacher salary of \$60,000 effective July 1, 2026. As of March 2026, twelve of Maryland's twenty-four school districts have not yet met the threshold. Counties on the Shore in particular do not have the local property tax base to absorb the local share of Blueprint costs without painful trade-offs against everything else the county is supposed to fund. By 2034, local districts statewide are projected to be paying \$700 million more annually than they would without the Blueprint.

Special education in MD-01.

Curriculum and staffing models for special education are state and local responsibilities, but federal IDEA dollars, federal compliance enforcement, federal teacher training programs, and federal grants for early intervention all shape what is possible. Congress promised in 1975 to cover 40 percent of the excess cost of special education through IDEA Part B. The actual federal share has hovered around 13 percent for years. The gap is the single biggest reason rural districts cannot afford the staffing model that works for kids whose needs are not the average.

Free school meals.

Title I schools currently can offer universal free meals through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which uses Medicaid and SNAP enrollment to identify schools where universal coverage makes sense. The OBBBA's Medicaid and SNAP narrowing (cross-reference Briefs 2.4 and 3.5) shrinks the CEP pipeline. Fewer kids on Medicaid and SNAP means fewer schools qualify for CEP, which means fewer kids get fed. Lower-Shore child food insecurity rates are the highest in Maryland.

The Somerset County school board.

In Somerset County, the local school board has spent the past year and a half firing its first Black superintendent, Dr. Ava Tasker-Mitchell, in violation of due process and replacing her with W. David Bromwell, the former Dorchester County superintendent; firing the school system's long-time legal counsel without a public vote and replacing them with politically aligned attorneys; attempting to defund every librarian position; ordering the removal of student-rights information about ICE encounters; and retreating to online meetings to avoid public comment. The Maryland State Board of Education ruled the firing violated her due process rights and publicly rebuked the board chair. The state Inspector General for Education found

the board violated state procurement law in how it hired its outside lawyers. The ACLU of Maryland has sued for records. In a county where the student body is majority Black, the all-white board's conduct is not an isolated personnel matter. It is a civil-rights problem hiding in plain sight.

Higher education and CTE.

MD-01 has Wor-Wic Community College, Chesapeake College, Cecil College, Harford Community College, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (Maryland's HBCU and 1890 land-grant institution), and Salisbury University. The foundation is real. What is missing is affordability for the students who need it most. UMES is among the most underfunded research universities in the state by historical formula. The 2023 federal letters to sixteen state governors (USDA and Department of Education, September 18, 2023) documented roughly \$13 billion in cumulative under-funding of 1890 land-grant HBCUs versus their 1862 land-grant counterparts. Maryland was on that list. UMES was the institution.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

In Somerset County, Dr. Ava Tasker-Mitchell, the first Black superintendent the county ever had, was fired by the local board in June 2025. The Maryland State Board of Education ruled the firing violated her due process rights and publicly rebuked the board chair's conduct toward her. The state Inspector General for Education found the board violated state procurement law in how it hired its outside lawyers. The ACLU of Maryland sued the board to force the release of public records. The board replaced her with W. David Bromwell, the former Dorchester County superintendent. Federal civil rights law, through Title VI and through the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, applies directly to what happened there. With OCR staffing cut and case backlogs ballooning, the federal mechanism that should be investigating discrimination patterns in school district hiring has been hollowed out. A restored OCR would mean Somerset County's Black students see federal civil rights law enforced rather than watching their superintendent get pushed out without consequence.

MY TAKE

A federal Department of Education that takes civil rights complaints seriously, fully funds IDEA, and protects Title I and free school meals is the bare minimum the federal government owes the kids in MD-01. Closing the Department, narrowing OCR, and routing federal money to private schools that can refuse children with disabilities is abandonment of those kids dressed up as reform.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Rebuild the Department of Education.

- Vote against any legislation to close ED. Cosponsor legislation to restore staffing and statutory functions, including the Office for Civil Rights, the Institute of Education Sciences, Federal Student Aid, the IDEA monitoring office, and Title I administration.

- Cosponsor legislation requiring congressional approval for any future interagency program transfers. The 118 programs administratively transferred out of ED need to come home.
- Defend Title I and IDEA funding floors. Both must be protected from being routed through block grants or vouchers.
- Vote against federal voucher expansion. The voucher language buried in the OBBBA could direct \$30 to \$50 billion annually to private and religious schools with no civil-rights or accountability strings.

Federal funding for MD-01's eleven counties.

- Push for a federal school infrastructure program with rural-county and Title I weights that direct dollars to Wicomico, Somerset, Dorchester, Caroline, Cecil, and the rural sections of Harford. Old buildings, bad HVAC, water-fountain lead, and mold are not abstract problems on the Shore.
- Pursue an expanded Title II and Title IV-A federal grant pathway specifically targeting counties that cannot absorb the local share of state-mandated salary floors.
- Restore the federal Mental Health Services Professional and School-Based Mental Health Services grant programs, prioritized for counties below the national ratio for school counselors and psychologists.

Special education that actually educates.

- Cosponsor the IDEA Full Funding Act. Congress promised 40 percent in 1975. Actual federal share is closer to 13 percent.
- Expand HRSA and Department of Education grants for evidence-based autism teacher training. Build a Shore pipeline through UMES, Salisbury University, and Towson.
- Restore Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) staffing for IDEA enforcement.

Free school meals.

- Cosponsor the Expanding Access to School Meals Act of 2025 (H.R. 2680 / S. 1431). The simplest, most cost-effective school nutrition policy is to feed every kid, period.
- Cosponsor legislation reversing the OBBBA's Medicaid and SNAP narrowing (cross-reference Briefs 2.4 and 3.5), which on its own restores CEP eligibility for many Shore schools.
- Push USDA to lower the CEP "identified student" threshold further (already lowered from 40 to 25 percent).
- Defend and expand Summer EBT permanently.

School boards, accountability, and Somerset County.

- Fight to fully staff the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.
- Defend the Civil Rights Data Collection. Resist administration efforts to reduce its scope.
- Expand the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence and the TEACH Grant program with Black-male-educator and minority-educator pipeline weights, directed to UMES, Salisbury University, and Bowie State for graduates who commit to teaching in high-needs MD-01 districts.
- Be a federal voice on what is happening in Somerset County. On the record. Without flinching.

Higher education.

- Cosponsor the College for All Act of 2025 (H.R. 3543 / S. 1832). Makes two years of community college tuition-free for in-state students, plus broader four-year affordability provisions.
- Cosponsor the PELL Act of 2025 (S. 1683). Doubling the Pell maximum is the single most consequential federal college affordability lever.
- Cosponsor HBCU funding parity legislation, with UMES specifically in mind. Use congressional oversight to push the federal land-grant funding formula toward parity.
- Expand Perkins V Career and Technical Education (CTE) funding with rural and apprenticeship weights.
- Restore and protect Public Service Loan Forgiveness.

In the District

A district office liaison for education, with focus areas including IDEA enforcement, IEP and 504 advocacy, civil rights complaints in MD-01 schools, and federal grant navigation for school districts.

IEP and 504 advocacy clinics across MD-01 counties, with parent-attorney advocates available pro bono or at low cost. Pursue federal funding for a permanent Parent Training and Information Center on the Shore through the Parent Center program.

Specific outreach to UMES, Salisbury University, Wor-Wic, Chesapeake, Cecil, and Harford Community Colleges on federal grant alignment, including HBCU funding parity, Perkins V, and TEACH Grant pipeline work.

A standing presence on Somerset County school board oversight. Public meetings attended, complaints to OCR documented, public reports issued.

Through Oversight

Public letters to ED's Office for Civil Rights on patterns affecting MD-01 districts, including Somerset County.

Demand committee hearings on the Department of Education dismantling, OCR backlog, and IDEA enforcement.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General and the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights on the Somerset County investigation and on disparate-discipline patterns across MD-01 districts.

Annual public report from the district office on federal education funding flowing to MD-01 by county and program.

THE HONEST PART

Saving the Department of Education from full dissolution depends on Congress holding the line. The administrative gutting can be slowed with appropriations and oversight pressure but cannot be fully reversed without a different administration.

IDEA full funding has been promised since 1975 and never delivered. The fight is incremental, every appropriations cycle. The work is making the case that this is the single biggest federal lever for special education in rural districts.

The Somerset County situation is a state-level personnel fight with a federal civil-rights overlay. Federal action depends on OCR being staffed and willing to investigate. State pressure (the State Board reprimand, the IG findings, the ACLU litigation) is doing the immediate work. Federal pressure makes the difference if the local board does not respond to state pressure.

UMES funding parity requires either a major appropriations push or a statutory change to the land-grant formula. Both are multi-year fights.

PSLF is contested every cycle. The work is keeping it intact and pushing for statutory protection.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- IDEA Full Funding Act (H.R. 2598, Rep. Huffman; S. 1277, Sen. Van Hollen).
- Expanding Access to School Meals Act of 2025 (H.R. 2680 / S. 1431).
- College for All Act of 2025 (H.R. 3543 / S. 1832).
- PELL Act of 2025 (S. 1683).
- Pay Teachers Act (S. 2481) and Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence reauthorization (S. 3433).
- Strengthening HBCU and 1890 land-grant funding legislation.
- Perkins V Career and Technical Education reauthorization.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, including Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV-A).
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- Higher Education Act, including Pell Grant and PSLF provisions.
- Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V).

SOURCES

- Department of Education Office for Civil Rights
- Maryland State Board of Education
- Maryland Inspector General for Education
- ACLU of Maryland Somerset County litigation
- 2023 federal letters on 1890 land-grant HBCU underfunding (USDA / Department of Education)
- Civil Rights Data Collection

PARTNERS

Maryland State Education Association. Maryland Association of Boards of Education. Maryland Association of Counties. NAACP Maryland State Conference. Caucus of African American Leaders. ACLU of Maryland. Wor-Wic Community College. Chesapeake College. Cecil College. Harford Community College. University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES). Salisbury University. Bowie State University.

BRIEF 5.2

Towns Worth Staying In

WHAT'S HAPPENING

MD-01 has rising rents, rising home prices, falling vacancy in some markets, and rising vacancy in others where landlords reject applicants for not earning four times the rent. Slumlord conditions (leaky roofs, mold, aluminum wiring, busted heating, lead paint) are common across multiple counties, and county executives often side with landlords against complaining tenants. "Affordable housing" as a political phrase has been stretched to meaninglessness. The number of unhoused Americans is at the highest level on record. Rural rental dynamics make the squeeze worse: roughly 21 percent of rural renters nationally pay half or more of their income in rent, and the Eastern Shore counties have the smallest rental stock in the district to absorb that pressure.

There is no single federal lever that fixes this. Several have to work together to make rent attainable, housing conditions safe, and homeownership reachable.

Source-of-income discrimination.

Landlords across the country routinely reject applicants whose income source is a Section 8 voucher, SSI, SSDI, or veterans benefits. Maryland's HOME Act (Md. State Government § 20-702) bans the practice statewide, and Maryland is one of 23 states with this protection. Federal law does not protect tenants in the other 27 states.

Rental screening.

Landlords use credit scores, eviction history, and "four-times-the-rent" rules to screen tenants. In practice these tools function as exclusion mechanisms more than as risk assessments. A working family in Salisbury making \$45,000 a year cannot pass a "four-times-the-rent" rule on a \$1,500/month apartment, even though that family could pay the rent. The unit sits vacant and the family stays in worse housing.

Slumlord accountability.

Federal Section 8 housing has to meet HUD Housing Quality Standards. In practice, enforcement has been weak. Landlords can collect federal subsidy dollars while keeping units in unsafe condition, especially in rural counties with limited code enforcement capacity.

Homeownership barriers.

First-time homebuyers, especially first-generation homebuyers (most often Black families historically excluded from FHA and VA homeownership), face down-payment hurdles that are higher than the underlying affordability math actually justifies.

Lead paint and aluminum wiring.

MD-01 has a lot of older housing stock. Lead paint hazards persist. Aluminum wiring (common in homes built between roughly 1965 and 1972) is a fire hazard that most homeowners cannot afford to fully replace.

The 1998 Faircloth Amendment.

Federal law has prohibited net increases in public housing nationally since 1999. The Faircloth Amendment to the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (42 U.S.C. § 1437g(g)) caps each housing authority at the number of units it owned, assisted, or operated on October 1, 1999. Section 8 vouchers became the only federal tool for adding affordable units. The Harford County Housing Choice Voucher waitlist is closed (cut off December 15, 2025; oldest open applications date to March 1, 2023), and most Eastern Shore county housing authorities run similar waitlist arithmetic. The Faircloth cap is a federal statutory choice, not a constitutional limit, and can be repealed.

(Veteran-specific homelessness work, including HUD-VASH and SSVF, lives in Brief 1.4 under Theme 1.)

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

Consider a working family in Salisbury looking at a \$1,500-a-month apartment. The household income is \$45,000 a year. They can afford the rent. Their landlord uses a "four-times-the-rent" rule that requires gross income of \$6,000 a month, or \$72,000 a year. The family does not qualify and the apartment stays empty. The family moves into a worse unit owned by a landlord who will accept them, often a unit with deferred maintenance, mold, or safety issues. Federal law does not currently prohibit the four-times-the-rent rule. Maryland does not currently prohibit it either. The result is concentrated poverty in the worst housing stock in the county, while better units sit vacant.

That household is one of the 37 percent of Harford County families that United Way classifies as ALICE: above the federal poverty line but unable to afford basic costs. Lower Shore counties almost certainly run higher. ALICE is the working-family category that federal poverty statistics miss, and it is where the housing crunch in MD-01 hits hardest.

MY TAKE

I support new construction, but not the pretense that more market-rate units priced for people making four times the rent solve a housing crisis driven partly by who is allowed to live in the units we already have. Attainability is a discipline different from supply.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

On attainability.

- Cosponsor federal source-of-income discrimination legislation. Federal law should prohibit landlords from refusing applicants because their income source is a Section 8 voucher, SSI, SSDI, or veterans benefits. Maryland has a state law; federal law should follow.
- Cosponsor rental screening reform legislation. Limit the use of credit scores, eviction history, and "four-times-the-rent" rules in tenant screening.

- Cosponsor the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act (H.R. 2725 / S. 1515) to expand the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) with a rural set-aside. Push for deeper income targeting (30 and 50 percent of Area Median Income) rather than allowing all units to cluster at 60 percent.
- Cosponsor the Eviction Right to Counsel Act of 2025 (H.R. 4761 / S. 2463) for tenants facing eviction.
- Cosponsor the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act (H.R. 2854 / S. 1686). Expand FHA homeownership programs and federal down-payment assistance, with deeper benefits for first-generation homebuyers.
- Cosponsor Faircloth Amendment repeal legislation. The 1998 cap (42 U.S.C. § 1437g(g)) prevents any net increase in U.S. public housing and is the single biggest federal block on adding new deeply affordable units. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez carried a House-passed repeal amendment in 2020. Cosponsor the current vehicle and push for inclusion in the next HUD/THUD appropriations cycle. Where outright repeal is not yet politically possible, expand HUD's Faircloth-to-RAD program, which converts unused Faircloth authority into deeply affordable units.

On landlord accountability.

- Push HUD to actually withhold and recover funds from landlords who take Section 8 dollars and fail to meet Housing Quality Standards.
- Expand HUD's Healthy Homes program and the Lead Hazard Reduction Grant program for older housing stock prevalent throughout MD-01.
- Cosponsor federal protections against retaliatory eviction.

In the District

A district office liaison for housing issues, with focus on tenant rights, source-of-income discrimination complaints, lead paint and aluminum wiring remediation, and first-time homebuyer support. Coordinates with Maryland Legal Aid, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, the Maryland Mortgage Program (the state-run first-time homebuyer pathway), and the Maryland Coalition to End Homelessness.

A specific function for Section 8 voucher holders facing landlord rejection. The district office tracks the pattern and files HUD complaints where appropriate.

Homebuyer education sessions across MD-01 counties, in partnership with HUD-approved housing counseling agencies and Tri-County Community Action.

Annual public report on housing conditions in MD-01 by county, including code enforcement complaints, eviction filings, and Section 8 voucher utilization.

Through Oversight

Public letters to HUD on Housing Quality Standards enforcement against MD-01 landlords with documented violations.

Demand committee hearings on rental screening practices and the four-times-the-rent rule.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General on enforcement of the state source-of-income law and on landlord retaliation cases.

THE HONEST PART

The four-times-the-rent rule and source-of-income discrimination are state-by-state issues. Maryland has acted. Federal action would protect tenants in states that have not. The work is keeping the legislation alive and finding bipartisan vehicles.

The LIHTC expansion is a bipartisan opportunity in some Congresses. The deeper income targeting (30 percent of AMI rather than 60 percent) is harder politically because developers prefer the higher tier. The work is making the case for the targeting reform.

HUD Housing Quality Standards enforcement depends on HUD staffing and on the secretary's willingness to enforce. Federal pressure can help; administration cooperation matters more.

The "just build more" debate is genuinely contested in housing policy circles. The honest position is that supply matters but attainability and tenant protections matter as much. New construction that prices out the people who currently need housing is not a solution to the housing crisis.

The other side of the cost ledger is that housing instability is itself expensive. Children's HealthWatch estimates avoidable health and special-education costs at \$111 billion over 10 years from housing instability among families with young children. The federal government already pays those downstream costs through Medicaid, IDEA Part B, and emergency room utilization. Stable housing is the cheaper line item.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Federal source-of-income discrimination legislation in the 119th Congress includes the Fair Housing Improvement Act (S. 2827 / H.R. 5443), the Housing Choice Voucher Mobility Demonstration Act (H.R. 206), the Choice in Affordable Housing Act (H.R. 3133), and the Discrimination Among Housing Voucher Holders Act (S. 934).
- Rental screening reform legislation in the 119th Congress includes the Fair Tenant Screening Act (H.R. 4369), the Rental Application Fee Reduction Act (H.R. 4100), and related provisions in S. 1465.
- Eviction Right to Counsel Act of 2025 (H.R. 4761 / S. 2463).
- Neighborhood Homes Investment Act (H.R. 2854 / S. 1686).
- Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act / LIHTC expansion (H.R. 2725 / S. 1515).
- Faircloth Amendment repeal legislation (current 119th Congress vehicle to be confirmed). Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez carried the 2020 House-passed amendment.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. § 3601 et seq.).
- Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.
- Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC).
- HUD Housing Quality Standards.
- HUD Healthy Homes Program.
- HUD Lead Hazard Reduction Grant Program.
- Federal Housing Administration (FHA) homeownership programs.

- Faircloth Amendment to the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-276), codified at 42 U.S.C. § 1437g(g). Caps net public housing at October 1, 1999 levels.
- HUD Faircloth-to-RAD program (administrative workaround that converts unused Faircloth authority into deeply affordable units).

SOURCES

- HUD: [hud.gov](https://www.hud.gov)
- HUD Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes
- Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
- Maryland Mortgage Program: [mmp.maryland.gov](https://www.mmp.maryland.gov)
- Maryland Commission on Civil Rights, Source of Income Guidance (Aug 2025)
- National Coalition for the Homeless on the Faircloth Amendment
- HUD Faircloth-to-RAD program
- Children's HealthWatch on housing instability cost
- UnitedForALICE
- National Low Income Housing Coalition
- Maryland Legal Aid
- Hunter Baker, "Combating Harford's Housing Crisis," Master's Capstone, American Public University System (February 2026)

PARTNERS

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. Maryland Legal Aid. Maryland Mortgage Program. National Low Income Housing Coalition. Maryland Coalition to End Homelessness. Tri-County Community Action. Eastern Shore Land Conservancy. Harford Community Action Agency (HCAA). Havre de Grace Housing Authority (HDGHA). Local fair housing organizations.

BRIEF 5.3

Real Jobs Here, Not Just Anywhere

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Growing up on the Lower Shore, you are told the only way to make it is to leave. Generations of Eastern Shore young people have heard that, and most of them have left. The lower-Shore economy is dominated by retail and poultry. Amazon warehouses have spread across the district. They hire, but the working conditions are well-documented. Maryland's state economic development infrastructure has not aggressively pursued MD-01 for substantive job placement, and the federal delegation's ability to direct industrial siting has not been used in the way it has been used for other parts of the state.

The data center push.

The data center boom is heading to MD-01. Major proposals are active in Baltimore and Harford counties. Pitches are coming down the Shore framed as "union construction jobs." What the experience in Northern Virginia, Texas, and Arizona has shown is that data centers are massive water consumers (millions of gallons per day per facility), massive electricity consumers (driving rate increases for everyone else on the grid), and massive land users with permanent operations workforces in the dozens, not the hundreds. The construction phase brings out-of-state crews. The companies bring their own engineers. The promised local hiring rarely materializes at scale.

The federal funding that has not flowed here.

The CHIPS and Science Act, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law together represent the largest federal industrial policy investment in a generation. Most of those dollars have flowed to other parts of the country. MD-01 has not been on the map for green manufacturing, EV battery, or grid-modernization investment.

The offshore wind opportunity.

The Maryland Offshore Wind project (cross-reference Brief 3.2) is a multi-billion-dollar industrial program. Sparrows Point, Tradepoint Atlantic, and Salisbury could be supply-chain hubs. The federal manufacturing tax credits and workforce funding to make that happen are within Congress's reach.

The workforce pipeline.

Wor-Wic Community College, Chesapeake College, Cecil College, and Harford Community College all run trade and technical programs that feed the construction and manufacturing economy. The IBEW, the Operating Engineers, the Steamfitters, and the Sheet Metal Workers all run apprenticeship programs. The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides funding that has not consistently flowed to MD-01.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

The data center push is the most concrete example of the wrong kind of "investment" coming to MD-01. A data center proposal pitched as bringing "union construction jobs" to a Lower Shore county sounds good until the numbers come out. A typical hyperscale data center consumes between three and five million gallons of water per day for cooling and hundreds of megawatts of electricity, driving water and power demand in a region where Vienna and other Shore towns already cannot fix their drinking water systems (cross-reference Brief 3.1). The construction phase is real but short-term and largely staffed by out-of-state union crews, while the permanent operations workforce is typically thirty to fifty people for a facility that occupies hundreds of acres. The county loses farmland or open space, gains an industrial water and power consumer, and gets nothing close to the job count promised in the pitch.

That is the realistic outcome of saying yes to a data center proposal. The better play is to direct the same energy toward fighting for the federal industrial investment that creates long-term jobs in MD-01.

MY TAKE

I am a no on data centers in MD-01. The math does not work for our water, our land, our power grid, or our workforce. There is no better data-center deal worth negotiating; the work is pursuing the federal industrial investment that creates long-term local jobs. I am the candidate to bring jobs that hire people who already live here and that do not leave us with depleted aquifers and blackout warnings.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Direct federal industrial dollars to MD-01.

- Work the appropriations and Commerce, DOE, and EDA committee channels to put MD-01 on the map for green manufacturing, offshore wind supply chain, EV battery, and grid-modernization investment.
- Fight for federal manufacturing tax credits and workforce funding to land Maryland Offshore Wind supply chain work at Sparrows Point, Tradepoint Atlantic, and Salisbury (cross-reference Brief 3.2).
- Push reforms going beyond the OBBBA's existing Opportunity Zone reporting requirements (P.L. 119-21 made OZs permanent with new accountability provisions, but the new framework still does not condition tax benefits on verified local hiring outcomes). Many MD-01 census tracts are designated Opportunity Zones, but the program has produced limited verified job creation in places like the Lower Shore.
- Direct EDA Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance grants to MD-01 industrial site readiness. If we want companies to come, our sites have to be shovel-ready.

Workforce development.

- Expand registered apprenticeship funding. Require federally funded construction (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, CHIPS, Inflation Reduction Act) to use registered apprentices.

- Direct WIOA funding to MD-01 community colleges (Wor-Wic, Chesapeake, Cecil, Harford) with green-jobs and healthcare-careers tracks.
- Expand federal clean-energy tax credit prevailing wage and apprenticeship requirements to additional clean-energy and manufacturing programs.

Data centers: federal disclosure and procurement standards.

- Cosponsor legislation requiring federal disclosure of data center water and power consumption. If a project is going to consume the water of a small city and the electricity of a small region, the public deserves to know before approval.
- Cosponsor legislation requiring PJM grid impact studies for new data center siting.
- Use federal procurement authority. The federal government, through GSA cloud contracts and DOD computing requirements, is one of the largest customers of hyperscale data center capacity. Federal procurement standards for water-efficient cooling, on-site renewable generation, and locally-hired permanent workforces are within Congress's authority.

In the District

A district office liaison for federal industrial and workforce funding, with focus areas including CHIPS, IRA, and BIL implementation, EDA grants, WIOA workforce funding, and registered apprenticeship coordination.

Annual public report on federal industrial dollars flowing to MD-01 by program, county, and recipient.

A standing public position on data center proposals in MD-01: no, with the math available on request. The district office documents the water and power consumption data, the actual permanent-job counts, and the grid impact for any active proposal.

Specific outreach to IBEW Local 24, IBEW Local 26, the Building Trades Councils, the Operating Engineers, the Steamfitters, and the Sheet Metal Workers on apprenticeship pipeline alignment with MD-01 community colleges.

A sustained partnership with Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore, the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Salisbury Committee, and the Maryland Department of Commerce on industrial site readiness across MD-01.

Through Oversight

Public letters to Commerce, Department of Energy, and EDA on grant flow patterns to Maryland and to MD-01 specifically.

Demand committee hearings on Opportunity Zone job creation outcomes and reform proposals.

Public letters to GSA and DOD on federal hyperscaler procurement standards.

Coordinate with PJM (the regional transmission organization) and with the Maryland Public Service Commission on data center grid impact analyses.

THE HONEST PART

CHIPS, IRA, and BIL implementation depends on the administration. Federal pressure can move some grant flow toward MD-01, but the broader allocation pattern is set by Commerce, DOE, and EDA leadership. The work is making the case persistently and being ready when the political math changes.

Opportunity Zone reform has bipartisan support in some quarters but has not passed. The work is keeping the reform legislation alive.

The data center fight is genuinely difficult because the proposals come with money and political pressure. Saying no requires standing up to local political pressure that wants the construction-phase jobs and the property-tax revenue. The work is making the case publicly with the actual numbers.

The offshore wind supply chain opportunity depends on the Maryland Offshore Wind project actually being built (cross-reference Brief 3.2). If the litigation and the federal hostility derail the project, the supply chain opportunity goes with it.

RECEIPTS

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- CHIPS and Science Act of 2022.
- Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (manufacturing tax credits).
- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law / Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021.
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- Economic Development Administration (EDA) Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance grants.
- Opportunity Zone tax benefits (Internal Revenue Code Section 1400Z).
- Registered Apprenticeship under Department of Labor.
- GSA federal cloud contracts; DOD computing requirements.

SOURCES

- Department of Commerce CHIPS implementation
- Economic Development Administration
- Department of Labor apprenticeship
- PJM Interconnection
- Maryland Department of Commerce

PARTNERS

Maryland Department of Commerce. Maryland Energy Administration. Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore. Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce. Greater Salisbury Committee. Eastern Shore SBDC (Small Business Development Center). Maryland AFL-CIO. IBEW Locals 24 and 26. Operating Engineers Local 37. Steamfitters Local 602. Sheet Metal Workers Local 100. Maryland Building Trades Councils. Wor-Wic Community College. Chesapeake College. Cecil College. Harford Community College.

BRIEF 5.4

Help for Small and Black-Owned Businesses

WHAT'S HAPPENING

The Small Business Administration is being hollowed out. The administration's FY2026 budget proposed eliminating 15 of the SBA's 16 entrepreneurial development programs and adding fees on the 7(a) loan program. The Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), the only federal agency dedicated to minority-owned businesses, has been targeted for elimination. New SBA underwriting rules took effect June 1, 2025, with stricter ownership and credit requirements that are already affecting Black-owned applicants. SBA 7(a) lending has declined sharply year over year. Congress restored some funding in the FY2026 appropriations act, but the agency is operating in retreat.

MD-01 has thousands of small businesses. Many are family-owned, many are veteran-owned, and a meaningful number are Black-owned, particularly in Salisbury, Cambridge, and the lower Shore. They need capital, paperwork help, and a federal partner who picks up the phone.

The capital access problem.

Conventional banks have systematically under-served small businesses in rural districts and Black-owned businesses in particular. The federal toolkit for this includes SBA 7(a) and 504 loans, microloans, the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI), the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund, and USDA's Rural Business Investment Company (RBIC) program. Each of these has been used at smaller scale than the need on the Shore actually requires.

The 8(a) and minority set-aside fight.

The SBA's 8(a) Business Development Program and other minority-owned business set-asides have been challenged in recent litigation and narrowed by administrative rule changes. These programs have been a significant pathway to federal contracting for Black-owned and women-owned businesses for decades.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

Consider a Black-owned small business in Salisbury, three years old, with steady revenue and a clear growth plan. The owner walks into a conventional bank for a \$250,000 working capital loan. The bank declines. The owner tries SBA 7(a). Under the June 2025 underwriting rules, her ownership structure and personal credit history disqualify her, even though her business cash flow easily supports the loan. She moves to a CDFI lender, who can underwrite her, but the CDFI does not have the capital pool to write the full \$250,000 at the rate she needs. The loan does not close. She does not hire the two employees she was planning to hire. The growth stalls. The federal toolkit exists for exactly her situation. None of the pieces, in their current state, actually completed the financing. Restoring the SBA, defending MBDA, expanding SSBCI, capitalizing CDFIs, and exploring an RBIC for the Shore are the way that loan closes.

MY TAKE

The federal government either makes capital available to small businesses that conventional banks will not touch, or it does not. Talking about supporting small business while letting SBA and MBDA be hollowed out is having it both ways. What matters here is whether the loans close.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Restore the SBA.

- Vote against any further cuts to SBA entrepreneurial development programs (Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers, Veterans Business Outreach Centers, SCORE).
- Cosponsor or introduce legislation to statutorily protect the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) from administrative defunding.
- Defend the 8(a) Business Development Program and other set-aside programs that have helped Black-owned and women-owned businesses access federal contracts, in light of recent legal and administrative challenges.

Capital access through credit enhancement.

- Cosponsor reauthorization and expansion of the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI). SSBCI is a federal-to-state credit-enhancement program. Push for set-asides for very rural districts (Delmarva qualifies) and for businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.
- Strengthen CDFI lending in MD-01. Defend CDFI Fund appropriations and direct technical-assistance grants to expand CDFI presence on the Shore. Community Development Financial Institutions and Minority Depository Institutions are the lenders most willing to underwrite Black-owned and rural small businesses.
- Explore a Rural Business Investment Company (RBIC) for the Shore. USDA's RBIC program licenses private equity funds to invest in rural small businesses with federal credit support. Work with USDA Rural Development and Maryland partners to evaluate whether MD-01 can host one.

In the District

A dedicated Small Business Liaison on staff. Not as a side-of-the-desk job. One person whose entire role is helping constituents navigate SBA loans, EIDL, federal grants, and state programs.

Grant and loan workshops, rotated across the district through Salisbury, Cambridge, Easton, Bel Air, Aberdeen, Edgewood, and Pocomoke. Walk people through 7(a), 504, microloan, MBDA, USDA Rural Development, and state programs. Application help in the room.

An MD-01 Small Business Week, co-hosted with chambers of commerce and the Tri-County Council, with a specific track for Black-owned and minority-owned businesses focused on capital access, federal contracting, and supply chain certification.

A specific outreach to Maryland Capital Enterprises, the Maryland Black Chamber of Commerce, and local SBDC offices on coordinated capital access for MD-01 small businesses.

Through Oversight

Public letters to SBA on the June 2025 underwriting rule changes and their impact on Black-owned applicants.

Demand committee hearings on MBDA defense and on 8(a) program protections.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General on enforcement of fair lending laws and on patterns of discrimination in conventional bank lending in MD-01.

Annual public report on federal small business funding flowing to MD-01 by program, county, and recipient demographics where available.

THE HONEST PART

Restoring SBA staffing depends on appropriations and on the administrator's posture. Federal pressure can preserve programs but cannot fully reverse the gutting without a different administration.

MBDA defense is a year-by-year fight. Statutory protection legislation has been introduced in prior Congresses without passing. The work is keeping it alive and finding a vehicle.

The 8(a) set-aside program is being narrowed by litigation and administrative rule. The work is defending the program structurally and supporting the legal defense.

CDFI capitalization is a matter of appropriations and Treasury allocation. Federal pressure can direct dollars to MD-01-serving CDFIs.

The RBIC for the Shore is exploratory. It depends on private fund managers willing to take on rural Eastern Shore deal flow with federal credit backing. The work in the first term is the evaluation and the partnership-building.

RECEIPTS

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- Small Business Administration (SBA) 7(a), 504, microloan programs.
- SBA 8(a) Business Development Program.
- Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA).
- State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI).
- Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund.
- USDA Rural Business Investment Program (RBIC).
- USDA Rural Development.

SOURCES

- SBA: [sba.gov](https://www.sba.gov)

- Maryland Capital Enterprises
- Maryland Black Chamber of Commerce
- Salisbury Wicomico Economic Development
- Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore

PARTNERS

Maryland Capital Enterprises. Salisbury Wicomico Economic Development. Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore. Greater Salisbury Committee. Maryland Black Chamber of Commerce. Local SBDC offices (Wor-Wic, Salisbury University, UMES). Eastern Shore Land Conservancy on rural development. Local CDFIs serving MD-01.

BRIEF 5.5

Get Where You're Going

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Federal transportation funding is the single biggest source of money flowing into MD-01 roads, bridges, transit, and EV charging. That funding is the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL / IIJA, 2021), and its surface transportation authorization expires September 30, 2026. The next Congress writes the replacement. Whoever holds MD-01 in 2027 votes on what comes next, and Andy Harris voted against the law that the district has been spending for five years.

The IIJA reauthorization cliff.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL, P.L. 117-58) authorized roughly \$567 billion in federal transportation spending over five years (FY2022 through FY2026). The Federal Highway Administration formula, the Bridge Formula Program, the Bridge Investment Program, the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program, the Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program, the PROTECT resilience program, and the FTA transit formulas (Sections 5310, 5311, 5307, 5337, 5339) all sit on top of the IIJA framework. All of them reset October 1, 2026. The Highway Trust Fund itself is heading toward insolvency: CRS estimates a \$166 to \$199 billion revenue-outlay gap over a five-to-six-year reauthorization at current spending. Without action, FTA payments slow in third quarter FY2027 and FHWA payments slow in second quarter FY2028. The 2027 Congress writes whatever replaces this, including how the Highway Trust Fund gets repaired.

The Bay Bridge replacement.

The Maryland Transportation Authority has endorsed a preferred alternative to remove and replace both existing Chesapeake Bay Bridge spans (built 1952 and 1973) on the existing corridor at Sandy Point. Estimated cost: \$14.8 to \$16 billion. The Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision are expected from FHWA in November 2026. MDTA asked for roughly \$739 million in federal funding in its June 2025 18-month plan. A replacement at this scale cannot be tolled into existence on its own; it requires federal grants (Bridge Investment Program, INFRA, Mega) and likely federal loans (TIFIA, RRIF). The Eastern Shore endpoint is in MD-01. Whoever sits in this seat in 2027 will be in the room when the federal share is decided.

The Aberdeen federal worker commute.

Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG) employs more than 21,000 civilian, military, and contractor workers, the largest employer in Harford County. The commute is either I-95 (heavy peak congestion) or the MARC Penn Line (graded F in early 2026 commuter-rail reliability surveys, with ridership recovering but still well below pre-COVID levels). The Susquehanna River Bridge replacement on the Northeast Corridor (Amtrak, \$2.1 billion, IIJA-funded, construction underway 2024-2030) sits between Perryville and Havre de Grace and is one of the largest federal infrastructure projects physically located in MD-01. It is funded by the law Andy Harris voted against.

Rural transit and watermen access.

Five locally-operated transit systems serve MD-01: Shore Transit (Wicomico, Worcester, Somerset), Delmarva Community Transit (Dorchester, Talbot, Caroline, Kent, Queen Anne's), Cecil Transit, and Harford Transit Link. All five run on FTA Section 5311 rural formula grants, Section 5310 senior and disability formula grants, and Section 5339 bus capital grants. Sunday and evening service is thin to nonexistent. Lower-Shore healthcare access (TidalHealth Salisbury, PRMC, Atlantic General) depends heavily on Section 5310 paratransit. The Smith Island Crisfield ferry, the Tilghman Island Knapps Narrows bridge, and the Hooper's Island bridges (losing roughly two acres a month to sea-level rise) all depend on federal Marine Highway funding, FTA Ferry Boat formula, the PROTECT resilience program, and the Bridge Investment Program. All of these federal sources reset with reauthorization.

The NEVI fight.

The IJJA's National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program funds DC fast-charger build-out along designated corridors. Maryland's NEVI plan covers US-50 (Bay Bridge to Ocean City), I-95 (Cecil and Harford), and US-13 (Salisbury to Pocomoke). The FY2026 transportation appropriations bill rescinded roughly \$500 million in unobligated state NEVI funds without touching the \$4.1 billion contract authority; the administration's full claw-back attempt was rejected. The NEVI program is on the House Republican target list every appropriations cycle. The state's stated design goal is no driver crosses the Bay Bridge and ends up stranded between fast chargers.

Andy Harris's record.

Andy Harris voted **NO** on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (H.R. 3684, House Roll Call 369, November 5, 2021), the only Maryland House member to do so. The bill provided roughly \$8 billion for Maryland highways, transit, ports, and broadband. He sits on the House Appropriations Committee and let the FY2026 NEVI rescission and the \$291 million Amtrak Northeast Corridor cut go through. He has publicly opposed Bay Bridge toll hikes (a 2025 press conference called the proposed 320 percent hike anti-family and anti-business) while also opposing the federal funding that would let MDTA replace the bridge without those toll hikes. The Common Sense Eastern Shore project has documented him claiming credit for IJJA-funded projects in MD-01 he voted against.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

A federal civilian worker at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Harford County faces the same daily commute math every day: I-95 means an unpredictable 45-minute to 90-minute drive depending on truck volume and weather, while the MARC Penn Line means a less unpredictable but still unreliable train that has been graded F in commuter-rail reliability surveys with ridership at roughly half of pre-COVID levels. The Penn Line's Susquehanna River Bridge is being replaced under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (a \$2.1 billion federal project) but the rest of the line still runs on aging signals, undersized stations, and a tunnel system in Baltimore that has been a known choke point for two decades.

Andy Harris voted no on the law that funds the Susquehanna Bridge replacement, the broader Penn Line capital program, the I-95 Tydings Bridge replacement, the MARC fleet replacement, and the federal share of any Bay Bridge rebuild. The 21,000 federal workers at APG depend on every one of those federal investments to get to work. The federal worker who commutes from Bel Air to APG is paying into a federal transportation system that her congressman has spent five years voting against.

The same family-and-mobility math touches every household she is connected to in MD-01. Her mother in Cambridge depends on Section 5310 paratransit through Delmarva Community Transit for dialysis appointments at TidalHealth Salisbury. Her brother running a charter boat out of Tilghman depends on the Knapps Narrows bridge staying in working order. Her last Saturday at her parents' house in Easton included two and a half hours of Bay Bridge eastbound traffic. The transportation system that defines MD-01 daily life is the system her congressman voted against funding.

MY TAKE

Transportation is the basic logistics of being able to get to work, to the doctor, to the boat ramp, and to your family. The federal money that built and maintains the roads, bridges, transit lines, and ferries this district uses every day is the law Andy Harris voted against. The next Congress writes the replacement law. That is the vote on the November 2026 ballot, whether it gets named that way or not.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

On the IIJA reauthorization (the big one):

- Vote for a fully-funded surface transportation reauthorization at IIJA-or-better baseline funding when the next law comes to the floor in 2027.
- Defend the Highway Trust Fund through a durable, bipartisan revenue fix that includes electric-vehicle and vehicle-miles-traveled contributions without disproportionately hammering rural drivers who cannot avoid driving.
- Defend the Bridge Formula Program with rural set-asides for off-system county-owned bridges. The Lower Shore has hundreds of pre-1970, weight-restricted county bridges that this program was specifically designed for.
- Defend the PROTECT resilience program for sea-level-rise adaptation on US-50, US-13, and Smith Island access.
- Defend NEVI contract authority and state apportionments. Block additional rescissions.

On the Bay Bridge:

- Push for federal grant funding (Bridge Investment Program, INFRA, Mega) to cover a meaningful share of the \$14.8 to \$16 billion replacement cost, with the explicit goal of holding down MDTA toll increases for Eastern Shore commuters.
- Coordinate with MD-03 (Rep. Sarah Elfreth, the western Bay Bridge endpoint) on a unified Maryland Democratic delegation position before the November 2026 Final EIS / ROD lands.

On Amtrak and MARC:

- Defend Amtrak Northeast Corridor capital funding in every appropriations cycle. Restore the FY2026 \$291 million Northeast Corridor cut.
- Push for federal capital grants for Aberdeen Penn Line station upgrades, Edgewood capacity work, and Martin State Airport station accessibility.

- Defend FTA Section 5337 State of Good Repair for fixed-guideway capital. The Penn Line and the Susquehanna Bridge rebuild depend on it.

On rural transit and ferries:

- Defend FTA Sections 5310 (seniors and disabilities), 5311 (rural areas), 5307 (urbanized), 5337 (state of good repair), and 5339 (bus and bus facilities) at IIJA-or-better levels. These are the operating-cash sources for Shore Transit, Delmarva Community Transit, Cecil Transit, and Harford Transit Link.
- Push for federal Marine Highway designation for the Crisfield-Smith Island route, plus FTA Ferry Boat formula increases.
- Push for Bridge Investment Program funding for Tilghman's Knapps Narrows bridge replacement when the existing 1998 bascule reaches its replacement window.
- Push for PROTECT formula funding for Hooper's Island bridge resilience work.

On airports:

- Defend FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding for Salisbury-Ocean City Wicomico Regional Airport (SBY) and Easton/Newnam Field (ESN). SBY's Runway 14/32 rehabilitation needs Phase 2 and Phase 3 grants.

In the District

A district office liaison for federal transportation funding, working with the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA), the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore, the Mid-Shore Regional Council, and the Upper Shore Regional Council. The liaison helps local jurisdictions and transit operators apply for federal competitive grants (RAISE, INFRA, Mega, Bridge Investment Program, Safe Streets and Roads for All) and tracks formula-program flow into MD-01.

A specific outreach to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Naval Air Station Patuxent River (which draws Lower Shore commuters), and the federal civilian workforce on commuter rail and highway capacity issues. Coordinate with Brief 1.1 federal workforce work.

A standing relationship with Smith Island United, the Tilghman Watermen's Association, Friends of Cambridge Harbor, and the Lower Shore watermen's associations on federal transportation and waterway-access funding.

A standing relationship with Disability Rights Maryland and AARP Maryland on Section 5310 paratransit and Section 5311 rural transit funding fights.

Annual public report on federal transportation funding flowing into MD-01 by program and county (FHWA, FTA, FAA, USACE, NOAA Marine Highway). Posted online.

Through Oversight

Public letters to the Federal Highway Administration on the Bay Bridge replacement Final EIS / ROD process and the federal share question.

Public letters to the Federal Transit Administration on Section 5311 rural transit awards and Section 5310 paratransit awards for MD-01 jurisdictions.

Demand committee hearings on the FY2027 surface transportation reauthorization and on the Highway Trust Fund insolvency question.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General and the Maryland Department of Transportation on federal grant flow to Maryland and on enforcement of federal-aid highway requirements.

THE HONEST PART

The next surface transportation reauthorization is a multi-year fight that does not come down to one vote. The Highway Trust Fund insolvency question (raise the gas tax, charge EVs, cut spending, or some combination) is politically painful in every direction. Nobody in either party wants to be on the record raising the gas tax, and nobody wants to be on the record cutting federal road money. The work is finding a durable revenue fix that does not just kick the problem to FY2030.

The Bay Bridge replacement is a state asset. The federal share is what a member of Congress can affect; the toll structure is set by MDTA. Pushing for the largest possible federal share is the lever that keeps tolls from absorbing the whole cost.

NEVI is being attacked every appropriations cycle. The administrative claw-backs continue regardless of any single vote. The work is annual defense of contract authority and state apportionments through the appropriations process.

Rural transit operators (Shore Transit, DCT, Cecil, Harford Transit Link) operate on extremely thin margins. Federal Section 5311 cuts hit fastest in places that already have the least service. The fight is preserving the formula and pushing for set-aside increases for paratransit and weekend service.

The MARC Penn Line reliability problem is partly a federal capital problem (Susquehanna Bridge, B&P Tunnel, Aberdeen station) and partly a state operations problem (MTA management, dispatching, equipment maintenance). Federal pressure can move the capital piece. The state operations piece is Annapolis's job.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL / Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act), Public Law 117-58, signed November 15, 2021. Surface transportation authorization expires September 30, 2026. Total ~\$567B over five years.
- Surface Transportation Reauthorization (FY2027 onward). To be drafted; will be the central transportation bill of the next Congress.
- FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Public Law 118-63. Five-year authorization through FY2028.
- Federal Marine Highway and Ferry Boat formula reauthorization vehicles (multiple bills across recent Congresses).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA): Federal-Aid Highway Program, Bridge Formula Program, Bridge Investment Program (BIP), Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program, Carbon Reduction Program, PROTECT resilience program, Safe Streets and Roads for All.
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA): Section 5310 (Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities), Section 5311 (Rural Areas), Section 5307 (Urbanized Areas), Section 5337 (State of Good Repair), Section 5339 (Bus and Bus Facilities), Capital Investment Grants.
- National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program. \$5B over five years.
- Federal Railroad Administration (FRA): Amtrak Northeast Corridor capital, Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail.

- USDOT competitive multimodal grants: RAISE, INFRA, Mega.
- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA): Airport Improvement Program (AIP).
- USACE Civil Works (waterways, ports, jetties, harbor maintenance).
- NOAA Marine Highway program.
- Highway Trust Fund (gas tax 18.4¢/gallon, diesel 24.4¢/gallon; not raised since 1993).

MARYLAND AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT): SHA (highways), MTA (transit and MARC), MAA (airports), Port Administration, MVA.
- Maryland Transportation Authority (MdTA): Bay Bridge, Hatem Bridge, Tydings Bridge, Key Bridge replacement, BWI tolls.
- Maryland Transit Administration: MARC Penn Line, locally-operated transit systems oversight.
- Locally-operated transit systems (LOTS): Shore Transit, Delmarva Community Transit, Cecil Transit, Harford Transit Link.

SOURCES

- House Clerk roll call records: clerk.house.gov/Votes
- Bay Crossing Study: baycrossingstudy.com
- Maryland Transportation Authority: mdta.maryland.gov
- Maryland NEVI Plan: evplan.mdot.maryland.gov/nevi-program
- MTA Locally Operated Transit Systems: mta.maryland.gov/lots
- CRS R47573 Highway Trust Fund
- CRS R48845 Surface Transportation Reauthorization
- Transportation for America FY26 THUD analysis
- CNS Maryland on Maryland's IIJA share (November 9, 2021)
- Common Sense Eastern Shore on Harris IIJA credit-claiming
- Andy Harris on Bay Bridge tolls: harris.house.gov

PARTNERS

Maryland Department of Transportation. Maryland Transportation Authority. Maryland Transit Administration. Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore (operates Shore Transit). Mid-Shore Regional Council. Upper Shore Regional Council. Greater Salisbury Committee. Maryland Farm Bureau (rural roads, weight limits, ag freight). IBEW Local 24 and Local 26. Operating Engineers Local 37. Steamfitters Local 602. Sheet Metal Workers Local 100. Maryland Building Trades Councils. Bicycle Coalition of Maryland. Disability Rights Maryland. AARP Maryland. Smith Island United. Tilghman Watermen's Association. Friends of the Cambridge Harbor. NAACP Maryland State Conference. Sierra Club Maryland Chapter. Smart Growth America / Transportation for America.

BRIEF 5.6

Houses People Can Live In

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Maryland law gives every county and municipality the authority to use four housing tools that have already been adopted and are working in other parts of the state. Most MD-01 counties have used few or none of them. The federal role is to support and fund the tools, not to dictate which counties use them.

Tenant unions and tenant power.

Tenant unions are membership-based renter organizations that bargain collectively over rent increases, maintenance, and eviction protections. They are different from building-level tenant associations: a tenant union covers a larger geographic area and negotiates with multiple landlords. Maryland law does not prohibit tenant unions, and a county can formally recognize them and create a "tenant support office" inside its housing department to handle mediation. Few MD-01 counties have done so. Federal action: HUD pre-development and capacity grants to fund the tenant-support function; federal protection against retaliatory eviction (cross-reference Brief 5.2).

Inclusionary zoning (IZ).

IZ requires developers of new residential projects to dedicate a share of new units to below-market affordable housing, defined by income brackets. Maryland's Land Use Article § 7-401 explicitly authorizes counties and municipalities to adopt IZ ordinances. Maryland jurisdictions that have done so include Montgomery County (the country's first IZ program, 1974, 12.5 percent mandatory minimum, 17,300+ affordable units produced), Howard County (10-15 percent set-aside), Baltimore City (operational since July 2024), plus Annapolis, Frederick City, Gaithersburg, Rockville, and Charles, Frederick, and Anne Arundel counties. No MD-01 county has adopted IZ. A new 200-unit market-rate development in Easton or Salisbury produces zero affordable units; the same development in Montgomery County would produce roughly 25 to 30 affordable units. Federal action: LIHTC rural set-aside expansion through the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act (cross-reference Brief 5.2); federal pre-development grants for counties that adopt IZ.

Publicly owned housing.

Public housing is built and operated by a local Housing Authority. Maryland has 24 Public Housing Authorities and roughly 14,000 public housing units statewide. MD-01 has one public housing community: Somerset Manor in Havre de Grace, run by the Havre de Grace Housing Authority (HDGHA), 60 units. Eight Eastern Shore counties have zero public housing. The 1998 Faircloth Amendment caps net public housing nationally at 1999 levels (cross-reference Brief 5.2), so any expansion requires either Faircloth repeal or use of the HUD Faircloth-to-RAD conversion program. Federal action: cosponsor Faircloth repeal (cross-reference Brief 5.2); fully fund the HUD Capital Fund and Operating Fund; defend HOME and CDBG flexibility for counties that want to capitalize a Local Housing Trust Fund.

Rent stabilization.

Rent stabilization caps the rate of annual rent increases. Maryland does not preempt local rent stabilization. Two Maryland jurisdictions have functioning rent stabilization ordinances: Montgomery County (HOME Act, Bill 15-23, signed July 2023, caps annual increases at the lesser of CPI plus 3 percent or 6 percent, with a 23-year exemption for new construction completed after January 1, 2000) and Prince George's County (Permanent Rent Stabilization and Protection Act of 2024, CB-055-2024, lesser of CPI plus 3 percent or 6 percent for general housing and lesser of 4.5 percent or CPI for senior housing, effective September 2024). No MD-01 county has adopted rent stabilization. A family in Salisbury can face an unlimited rent increase in a renewal cycle; a family in identical circumstances in Bethesda or Bowie cannot. Federal action: there is no direct federal lever, but federal funding through CDBG and HOME can support the tenant-stabilization administrative work counties need to do.

Local housing trust funds.

Counties can create dedicated Local Housing Trust Funds to capitalize public housing development, IZ in-lieu fees, tenant-stabilization work, and emergency assistance. The Maryland Affordable Housing Trust at the state level provides matching funds. Federal HOME and CDBG dollars can flow through. Howard County, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and the City of Baltimore have established trust funds. Most MD-01 counties have not. Federal action: defend HOME, CDBG, and the Treasury CDFI Fund's housing programs.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

A Salisbury family pays \$1,500 a month in rent under a one-year lease. Their landlord, an out-of-state LLC, raises rent by 28 percent at renewal. The family can pay \$1,920 a month or move. Maryland law allows this rent increase. A family in identical circumstances in Bethesda or Bowie would be protected: their landlord's annual rent increase would be capped at the lesser of CPI plus 3 percent or 6 percent. The Salisbury family pays the full \$420-a-month difference because Wicomico County has not adopted the same rent stabilization ordinance Montgomery and Prince George's County passed. The county has the legal authority; the ordinance has not been written.

Down the street, a 200-unit apartment building is being developed on a vacant lot by the same out-of-state landlord. None of the 200 units will be reserved as affordable, because Wicomico County has not adopted an inclusionary zoning ordinance. The same 200-unit building in Montgomery County would produce 25 to 30 affordable units mandated under MPDU. The state law permitting IZ has been on the books since the 1970s. The Wicomico ordinance has not been written.

The federal government cannot pass either of those county ordinances. What the federal government can do is fund the tools that make adoption easier: HOME and CDBG flexibility for tenant-support offices; HUD pre-development grants for IZ implementation; LIHTC rural set-aside expansion to make affordable construction pencil out on the Eastern Shore; defense of Section 5311 transit money so any new housing is actually reachable from work and school (cross-reference Brief 5.5); and Faircloth Amendment repeal to let HDGHA add to Somerset Manor (cross-reference Brief 5.2).

MY TAKE

A federal representative can do two things on county-level housing policy: convene the people who can adopt the tools, and fund the federal supports that make adoption possible. The four tools work elsewhere in Maryland. The legal authority is on the books. What is missing in MD-01 is a federal partner who treats county housing policy as part of the job.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

On Faircloth and public housing:

- Cosponsor Faircloth Amendment repeal legislation (cross-reference Brief 5.2). The 1998 cap (42 U.S.C. § 1437g(g)) is the single biggest federal block on adding new deeply affordable units. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez carried a House-passed repeal in 2020.
- Push HUD to expand the Faircloth-to-RAD program, which converts unused Faircloth authority into actual units. HDGHA could use it to add to Somerset Manor.
- Defend the HUD Public Housing Capital Fund and Operating Fund in every appropriations cycle.

On HOME, CDBG, and trust-fund support:

- Defend the federal HOME Investment Partnerships Program and the Community Development Block Grant program at IJA-era spending levels. Both can flow into Local Housing Trust Funds counties have authority to establish.
- Push for federal pre-development grants for counties capitalizing trust funds for the first time. The capacity barrier is real on the Lower Shore.
- Defend the Treasury CDFI Fund and the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) housing-adjacent provisions (cross-reference Brief 5.4).

On LIHTC and rural construction:

- Cosponsor the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act (H.R. 2725 / S. 1515) (cross-reference Brief 5.2) with explicit rural set-asides and deeper income targeting (30 and 50 percent of AMI rather than letting all units cluster at 60 percent).
- Push USDA Rural Development's Section 515 and Section 538 multifamily loan programs for new affordable construction in MD-01 small towns.

On tenant power:

- Cosponsor federal legislation establishing baseline retaliatory-eviction protections (cross-reference Brief 5.2) so counties recognizing tenant unions are not legally exposed.
- Push HUD to publish guidance recognizing tenant-support offices and tenant unions as eligible recipients of pre-development and capacity grants under existing HUD authority.

In the District

A district office liaison for county-level housing policy, working with the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Maryland Affordable Housing Trust, the Harford Community Action Agency (HCAA), the Havre de Grace Housing Authority (HDGHA), Maryland Capital Enterprises, and county housing offices in each MD-01 county. The liaison helps counties navigate federal funding applications when they decide to adopt IZ, recognize tenant unions, capitalize trust funds, or expand public housing.

A standing MD-01 Housing Tools Roundtable. Brings county housing offices, county council members willing to engage, county economic development directors, regional councils (Tri-County Lower Eastern Shore, Mid-Shore Regional Council, Upper Shore Regional Council), Maryland DHCD staff, HCAA, and tenant advocates into one room. The point is technical assistance and peer learning across counties.

A specific outreach to Hunter Baker (Harford County housing researcher; author of "Combating Harford's Housing Crisis," 2026), Maryland Capital Enterprises, the Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition, and the Public Justice Center on a rolling basis as MD-01 counties consider adoption.

Annual public scorecard: which MD-01 counties have adopted which of the four tools. Posted online.

Through Oversight

Public letters to HUD on Faircloth-to-RAD program implementation in MD-01, specifically Somerset Manor capacity expansion.

Public letters to USDA Rural Development on Section 515 and Section 538 multifamily loan flow into MD-01 small towns.

Demand committee hearings on Faircloth Amendment repeal and on LIHTC rural set-aside expansion.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General on enforcement of the state HOME Act source-of-income protections at the county level (cross-reference Brief 5.2).

THE HONEST PART

These are state and local tools. A member of Congress cannot pass a Wicomico County rent stabilization ordinance. What a member of Congress can do is fund the federal supports that make adoption easier (HOME, CDBG, HUD capacity grants, LIHTC expansion, Faircloth repeal), convene county officials and advocates, and use the public platform of the office to make the case that these tools are not radical.

The four tools have different political weights in MD-01. Tenant unions and inclusionary zoning are the most achievable in the near term. Rent stabilization is harder politically because landlord interests organize quickly. Public housing expansion is the heaviest lift because Faircloth has to come down at the federal level first.

The Eastern Shore housing market is structurally different from Hunter Baker's Harford suburban-fringe focus. Smaller rental stock, second-home dynamics in Worcester (Ocean City), severe rural rental scarcity in Crisfield and Cambridge, watermen and farmworker housing pressure that does not fit the suburban model. The four tools translate as a menu, not a recipe. Each county that engages will need a different combination.

The convening role of a member of Congress is real but bounded. It depends on county officials who are willing to engage. Some are. Some are not. The work is showing up consistently and making the federal funding case clearly enough that local elected officials see the upside in adoption.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Faircloth Amendment repeal legislation (current 119th Congress vehicle to be confirmed). Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez carried the 2020 House-passed amendment.
- Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act (H.R. 2725 / S. 1515) — LIHTC expansion with rural set-aside (cross-reference Brief 5.2).
- HOME Investment Partnerships Program reauthorization legislation.
- Tenant union and retaliatory eviction protection legislation (multiple bills across recent Congresses).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- Faircloth Amendment to the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-276), codified at 42 U.S.C. § 1437g(g).
- HUD Public Housing Capital Fund and Operating Fund.
- HUD Faircloth-to-RAD program.
- HUD HOME Investment Partnerships Program.
- HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.
- Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC).
- USDA Rural Development Section 515 (multifamily) and Section 538 (multifamily loan guarantee) programs.
- Treasury CDFI Fund.

MARYLAND AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- Maryland Land Use Article § 7-401 — state authority for counties and municipalities to adopt inclusionary zoning.
- Maryland State Government § 20-702 — HOME Act, source-of-income discrimination ban (cross-reference Brief 5.2).
- Maryland Affordable Housing Trust (state-level matching fund for Local Housing Trust Funds).
- Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

MARYLAND JURISDICTIONS WITH ADOPTED TOOLS (COMPARATORS)

- Inclusionary zoning: Montgomery County (MPDU, 1974), Howard County (MIHU), Baltimore City (Ordinance 24-308, July 2024), Annapolis, Frederick City, Gaithersburg, Rockville, Charles County, Frederick County, Anne Arundel County.
- Rent stabilization: Montgomery County (Bill 15-23, July 2023, lesser of CPI+3% or 6%), Prince George's County (CB-055-2024, September 2024, lesser of CPI+3% or 6%, with a 4.5% / CPI cap on senior housing).
- Local Housing Trust Funds: Montgomery County, Howard County, Prince George's County, City of Baltimore.
- Public housing: 24 Maryland Public Housing Authorities operating ~14,000 units statewide. MD-01: Havre de Grace Housing Authority operating Somerset Manor (60 units).

SOURCES

- Hunter Baker, "Combating Harford's Housing Crisis," Master's Capstone, American Public University System (February 2026)
- Maryland DHCD 2025 Housing Needs Assessment
- Montgomery County DHCA Rent Stabilization

- Prince George's County PRSA
- Howard County Moderate Income Housing Unit (MIHU)
- National Coalition for the Homeless on the Faircloth Amendment
- HUD Faircloth-to-RAD program
- Common Dreams on the AOC 2020 Faircloth repeal vote
- Md. Code, Land Use § 7-401 (state IZ authority)
- Havre de Grace Housing Authority: hdgha.org

PARTNERS

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. Maryland Affordable Housing Trust. Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition. Hunter Baker (Harford housing researcher). Harford Community Action Agency (HCAA). Havre de Grace Housing Authority (HDGHA). Maryland Capital Enterprises. Public Justice Center. Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore. Mid-Shore Regional Council. Upper Shore Regional Council. National Low Income Housing Coalition. Maryland Coalition to End Homelessness. Maryland tenant advocacy organizations.

HOW WE PAY

Every policy document gets the same question, and it deserves an answer: how do you pay for it? The Plan answers it in two parts, because there are two different conversations happening when people ask. Part I is the federal pay-for menu, the revenue and savings options that fund federal commitments. Part II is district economic development, the specific federal, state, and private dollars the office will work to bring back to MD-01.

IN THIS APPENDIX

A.1	Part I: The Federal Pay-For Menu	p. 232
A.2	Three Honest Categories	p. 234
A.3	Part II: Bringing It Home to MD-01	p. 240
A.4	Tools One Through Four	p. 241
A.5	Measuring Success	p. 250

A . 1

Part I: The Federal Pay-For Menu

STARTING WITH AN HONEST FRAME

Republican opponents will frame the question of paying for Democratic priorities as if Republicans are the fiscally responsible party. They are not. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act, the centerpiece Republican legislation of 2025 signed into law on July 4, 2025, increases the federal deficit by \$3.4 trillion over ten years according to the Congressional Budget Office's conventional score. That number rises to \$4.1 trillion when interest is included, and as much as \$5 trillion if its temporary tax cuts are made permanent (which is the explicit Republican plan).

The OBBBA paid for those tax cuts by cutting Medicaid by more than \$1 trillion, cutting SNAP, capping student loans, and pushing 10 million Americans off health insurance. The point of the cuts was to extend the 2017 Trump tax cuts, which overwhelmingly benefit the top 1 percent. Andy Harris voted yes.

That is the actual fiscal record. Anyone who pretends Republicans care about the deficit while voting for \$5 trillion in unpaid-for tax cuts is not arguing in good faith. The honest debate is not whether we pay for things (nobody pays for everything) but what we choose to spend money on, and on whom.

Republicans added \$3.4 trillion to the deficit to give tax cuts to billionaires while cutting Medicaid. Democrats are asked to pay for every dollar of healthcare, education, and infrastructure investment we propose. Both parties should be held to the same standard. Currently, only one is.

THREE HONEST CATEGORIES

Not every plank in this platform is a budget-neutral pay-for. Some clearly are. Others are public investments that pay back over decades, the way the GI Bill paid back. Many are necessary spending the country chooses to fund because the alternative is worse and ultimately more expensive. The Plan does not pretend every dollar offsets. It tells voters which is which.

Section A.2 takes the categories one at a time, with the actual revenue and savings figures attached.

A . 2

Three Honest Categories

CATEGORY ONE: PAYS FOR ITSELF

Closing loopholes and collecting what's owed

Some funding sources require nothing except the political will to enforce existing law and close existing loopholes. These are the easiest fights to win on the merits and the hardest to win politically because they cost rich and powerful people money.

Close the federal tax gap.

The IRS most recently projected the federal tax gap (taxes legally owed but not paid) at roughly \$696 billion per year for tax year 2022, with a net post-enforcement gap around \$606 billion. The Inflation Reduction Act's investment in IRS enforcement was projected to bring in \$180 billion to \$400 billion over a decade, depending on the scorekeeper. The administration has gutted that enforcement capacity. Restoring it is the single largest revenue source available without raising a single tax rate. The tax gap is concentrated overwhelmingly at the top: more than \$160 billion per year is owed but unpaid by the top 1 percent alone.

Eliminate fossil fuel subsidies.

Federal direct subsidies to fossil fuel production now total roughly \$35 billion per year, more than double the 2017 level, after the OBBBA added \$4 billion in new annual fossil-fuel handouts. The Biden administration's FY2024 budget proposal would have eliminated 13 fossil fuel tax preferences for \$97 billion in 10-year savings. The Plan supports the End Oil and Gas Tax Subsidies Act and similar legislation. The fossil fuel industry is the most profitable industry in human history. It does not need taxpayer welfare.

Audit the Pentagon.

The Department of Defense failed its eighth consecutive financial audit in December 2025. It cannot account for tens of percentage points of its \$4.65 trillion in assets. Twenty-six material weaknesses were identified in the most recent audit. The Joint Strike Fighter (F-35) program alone, projected to cost \$2 trillion over its lifespan, has assets the Pentagon literally cannot find. The annual defense budget is now \$901 billion. The Plan supports legislation that conditions Pentagon funding on actually passing an audit, and votes against blank-check defense authorizations until basic financial accountability is restored. If a Maryland small business cannot keep its books, it loses its credit line. The same standard should apply to the largest spender in the federal government.

Operating note: no new money while the audit is happening, but everyone keeps their jobs and pay.

Close the carried interest loophole.

Hedge fund and private equity managers pay capital gains rates (currently 20 percent) on what is functionally compensation income (which would be taxed at up to 37 percent) through the carried interest loophole. Closing it raises an estimated \$13 billion or more over a decade. Both Democratic and Republican presidents have pledged to close it. Neither party's Congress

has actually done it.

Stepped-up basis reform.

Current law allows inherited assets to receive a stepped-up basis at the heir's acquisition, meaning a lifetime of capital gains on inherited stock or property goes untaxed forever. Reform raises an estimated \$400 billion or more over a decade. This is a wealth-transfer benefit that overwhelmingly accrues to the top 1 percent of households.

Billionaire minimum income tax.

Co-sponsor legislation requiring the wealthiest 0.01 percent of households to pay a minimum effective tax rate of 25 percent on income, including unrealized gains. Multiple analyses score this in the range of \$360 to \$500 billion over a decade.

Roll back the OBBBA tax cuts for the wealthiest.

Letting the top-bracket portions of the OBBBA expire (the cuts overwhelmingly benefiting households making more than \$400,000) saves hundreds of billions over a decade. This is not a tax increase on working families. It is a refusal to extend a tax cut to the highest earners.

CATEGORY TWO: PAYS FOR ITSELF OVER TIME

Public investment that returns

Some federal investments do not show up in a 10-year budget window as net positive on the day they are made, but the long-run math is clear. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that for every dollar invested in childhood vaccinations, the United States saves between \$4 and \$11 in future medical costs. FEMA estimates BRIC mitigation grants return \$6 to \$8 in avoided disaster costs for every dollar spent. Pell Grants and federal student aid for community college graduates return tax revenue from higher lifetime earnings. These are investments, and we treat them honestly when we acknowledge that a 10-year scorekeeping window is too short for measuring their full return.

Medicare drug price negotiation expansion.

The IRA's Medicare drug price negotiation program is projected by CBO to save \$98.5 billion over its first decade. The first round of negotiations (ten drugs taking effect January 2026) will save Medicare an estimated \$6 billion in year one alone, with \$1.5 billion in beneficiary out-of-pocket savings. The second round (15 additional drugs) takes effect January 2027 with another \$12 billion in projected Medicare savings. Annual savings are projected to grow to roughly \$25 billion by 2031. Expanding the negotiation program to more drugs and earlier in their patent life is a multi-hundred-billion-dollar lever.

Full IDEA funding.

Congress promised in 1975 to cover 40 percent of the excess cost of special education through IDEA Part B. The actual federal share has hovered around 13 percent. Closing that gap costs money up front but reduces state and local property tax pressure, lifetime disability service costs, and special education litigation. The investment returns over decades.

BRIC and disaster mitigation.

Every dollar spent on FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities mitigation grants returns six to eight dollars in avoided disaster costs. Restoring and expanding BRIC (see Brief 3.3) is one of the highest-return federal investments available.

Universal pre-K and child care.

Multiple economic studies (Heckman et al.) demonstrate returns of \$7 to \$13 per dollar invested in high-quality early childhood education through higher lifetime earnings, lower incarceration rates, lower welfare dependency, and improved health outcomes.

Postpartum Medicaid extension and Momnibus implementation.

Maternal mortality is overwhelmingly preventable. Each maternal death is associated with significant downstream costs in Medicaid (orphan care, foster care, lifetime developmental impacts). Investing in maternal health pays back through reduced NICU costs, reduced disability services, and a larger productive workforce.

CATEGORY THREE: PUBLIC INVESTMENTS WE MAKE

Investments worth making, the same way we built the interstates

Some federal commitments are simply public investments. They do not pay for themselves on a CBO scoresheet. We make them anyway because that is what a country does. The interstate highway system, the GI Bill, and Social Security all required public spending that took decades to pay back. A serious country invests in its people and its infrastructure even when the spreadsheet does not balance in the short run. What it does have to do is be honest about the costs and choose them deliberately.

- **Universal free school meals.** Feeding every kid is the right thing to do. It costs money. We pay it.
- **Restoring the Department of Education.** An education department is the kind of thing a country has. The funding goes back in.
- **Restoring NIH, NOAA, NWS, EPA, USGS, and the Chesapeake Bay Program.** Federal scientific capacity is a public good. Underfunding it costs more than restoring it.
- **Veteran healthcare and the VA.** A promise made and a promise kept.
- **Title VIII nursing workforce funding.** The federal government provides \$17.8 billion annually for graduate medical education and \$305 million for nursing workforce development. The Plan rebalances.

PUTTING THE MATH TOGETHER

The pay-fors above, taken together, represent in the range of \$3 to \$5 trillion in available revenue and savings over a decade. That is enough to fund a substantial expansion of healthcare access, education investment, climate adaptation, infrastructure, and rural development without raising income taxes on the bottom 95 percent of American households. The math works. The obstacle is the political power of the wealthy taxpayers, the fossil fuel companies, the defense contractors, and the pharmaceutical industry that benefit from the current arrangement.

If the question is whether we can afford to feed children, treat veterans, repair infrastructure, lower drug prices, and protect the environment, the answer is yes, because we already spend the money. We just spend a lot of it on tax cuts for people who do not need them and on Pentagon line items that cannot be audited. Reordering those priorities is the job.

A . 3

Part II: Bringing It Home to MD-01

FEDERAL POLICY IS NATIONAL. FEDERAL MONEY IS LOCAL.

A member of Congress who is not aggressively working federal funding streams to bring dollars home to the district is not doing the job. This part of the appendix lays out exactly how the office will work to direct federal dollars into MD-01, by tool, by agency, and by county, over a ten-year arc.

The four tools, summarized:

- **Tool One: Community Project Funding.** The reformed earmark process. Up to 15 specific projects per year, transparent and competitive, distributed across all eleven counties.
- **Tool Two: Federal Grant Strategy by Agency.** Positioning MD-01 institutions to win the \$700+ billion per year of competitive and formula grants administered by federal agencies, with a dedicated Federal Grants Liaison on staff.
- **Tool Three: Stacking Federal, State, Philanthropic, and Private Dollars.** Coordinating funding stacks across sources so that rural and small-city projects actually get built.
- **Tool Four: Saying No To The Wrong Money.** Declining funding sources that hurt the district more than they help.

Section A.4 takes each tool in turn. Section A.5 lays out how the office will publicly measure whether all of this is working.

The previous representative directed federal water infrastructure money to a specific Worcester County ZIP code along political lines while bypassing places like West Vienna in Dorchester. That practice ends. Going forward the office serves all eleven counties on equal terms and reports its work publicly each year.

A . 4

Tools One Through Four

TOOL ONE: COMMUNITY PROJECT FUNDING

Community Project Funding (CPF), known in the Senate as Congressionally Directed Spending and historically called earmarks, is one of the most powerful federal tools available to a sitting House member. The post-2021 reformed earmark process is transparent (every request is publicly disclosed with full sponsor information and a no-financial-interest certification), competitive (only state and local government entities, public institutions, and nonprofits are eligible), and capped (House members are limited to 15 requests per fiscal year, with combined CPF capped at 0.5 percent of all discretionary spending).

The catch: in fiscal year 2025, when Congress passed only a continuing resolution, zero CPF projects were funded. Restoring regular order on appropriations is itself a precondition for using this tool.

Used aggressively, CPF can pull millions to tens of millions of dollars per year directly into a district for specific projects: a new community health center clinic, a water main replacement, a STEM lab at a community college, a flood mitigation project, a port dredging project, a regional behavioral health crisis center. The projects must come from local government and nonprofit applicants. The office's job is to surface, evaluate, vet, and competitively select the strongest 15 each year.

The CPF Strategy For MD-01

Geographic equity, not political reward.

CPF requests will be distributed across MD-01's eleven counties based on need and project quality, not on political loyalty or ZIP code. Every county will see CPF activity from the office over the course of a term.

An open, competitive, public application process.

The district office will publish CPF application materials in the first month of the term. Applications open every December for the upcoming fiscal year. Selection criteria, scoring rubric, and final selections all published online. Local government and nonprofit staff in this district deserve a transparent process, not a back-channel one.

Technical assistance to applicants.

Many small Shore municipalities, county departments, and rural nonprofits do not have grant writing capacity. The office will provide application support: how to write the federal nexus statement, how to budget the project, how to demonstrate the matching funds plan. The point is to widen the funnel of eligible projects, not to gatekeep it.

Coordination with Senators Van Hollen and Alsobrooks.

Senate Congressionally Directed Spending has no per-member cap, which means a coordinated House-Senate strategy can multiply the dollars flowing to a single MD-01 project. The office will coordinate with the Maryland Senate offices on every CPF request to maximize the chance of joint House-Senate funding.

Sample MD-01 CPF Project Pipeline (Illustrative)

These are illustrative examples of the kinds of projects the office will solicit and prioritize. Actual requests would depend on local applications received and competitive scoring. None of these are commitments at this stage. They are the categories of projects MD-01 should be advancing through the CPF process.

- **Cecil County:** Drinking water infrastructure replacement (lead service lines), Susquehanna emergency response upgrades, Cecil College workforce equipment grants.
- **Kent County:** Septic system replacement program for Bay tributary communities, Chestertown medical access expansion, Black history preservation projects (Galena, Worton).
- **Queen Anne's County:** Stormwater management infrastructure, Chesapeake College allied health expansion, Kent Narrows working-waterfront preservation.
- **Talbot County:** Federal advocacy for VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic siting (see Brief 1.4), Easton mental health crisis center, watermen heritage preservation funding.
- **Caroline County:** Rural broadband expansion, Denton water and sewer modernization, federally qualified health center capacity.
- **Dorchester County:** Vienna water system upgrade (long overdue, see Brief 3.3), Hooper's Island shoreline mitigation, Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park infrastructure, Cambridge waterfront flood mitigation (full \$16M).
- **Wicomico County:** Salisbury riverfront flood mitigation, Wor-Wic Community College nursing simulation labs, UMES research infrastructure, eastern Wicomico FQHC expansion, Salisbury area STEM education.
- **Somerset County:** Crisfield flood mitigation full \$36M obligation restoration plus phase two, Smith Island and Deal Island shoreline protection, Princess Anne workforce development, Black watermen heritage and pipeline programs.
- **Worcester County:** Pocomoke River water quality, Berlin and Snow Hill rural infrastructure, coastal resilience for low-lying communities, Pocomoke City VA outpatient clinic enhancements.
- **Harford County:** Northern Harford emergency medical services capacity (post-Harford Memorial closure), Havre de Grace flood mitigation, Aberdeen workforce training partnership with the BRAC industrial corridor, Edgewood community development.
- **Eastern Baltimore County (MD-01 portion):** Middle River / Rosedale federally qualified health center expansion, Dundalk waterfront brownfield remediation, behavioral health crisis stabilization beds (Franklin Square load reduction).

TOOL TWO: FEDERAL GRANT STRATEGY

Beyond CPF, the federal grant universe is enormous. Well over \$700 billion per year flows through competitive and formula grants administered by federal agencies. Most of this money is awarded based on application quality, not member request. A member of Congress who positions district institutions to win those competitive grants (by signaling priorities, writing letters of support, hosting agency officials, providing technical assistance) can multiply district dollars far beyond what CPF alone delivers.

The Federal Grant Strategy

A dedicated Federal Grants Liaison on the district office staff.

Not a side-of-the-desk job. One person whose entire role is helping MD-01 institutions (counties, towns, hospitals, schools, nonprofits, small businesses, agricultural producers) identify, apply for, and win competitive federal grants.

Annual MD-01 federal grant briefing.

For local government and institutional leaders. Covering upcoming federal funding opportunities across all major agencies and how to position for them.

Letters of support for every meritorious MD-01 application.

Across all agencies, on a transparent rolling basis. Federal program officers consistently report that congressional letters of support move applications in close calls.

Priority Federal Agencies and Programs

- **USDA Rural Development.** Community Facilities loans and grants, Rural Utilities Service water and wastewater grants, Rural Business Development Grants, Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), Value-Added Producer Grants, Heirs' Property Relending Program. MD-01 is overwhelmingly USDA Rural Development eligible.
- **FEMA.** BRIC, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Flood Mitigation Assistance, Assistance to Firefighters Grants, Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grants. MD-01 is one of the most flood- and storm-exposed districts in Maryland.
- **EPA.** Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds, Brownfields grants, Chesapeake Bay Program funding, Diesel Emission Reduction Act grants.
- **HHS / HRSA.** Federally Qualified Health Center expansion grants (Section 330), Rural Health Clinic Vaccine Confidence funding, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Title X family planning, Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, AHRQ research.
- **Department of Education.** Title I, Title II, Title IV-A grants; IDEA discretionary grants; Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence; Perkins V CTE; Strengthening HBCUs (UMES eligible); TRIO programs; GEAR UP.
- **Department of Transportation.** Rural Surface Transportation Grants, Bridge Investment Program, Reconnecting Communities, Safe Streets for All, Port Infrastructure Development, Railroad Crossing Elimination Program. The Salisbury bypass, the Bay Bridge corridor, and the BRAC corridor all qualify.
- **Department of Commerce / EDA.** Public Works grants, Economic Adjustment Assistance, Build to Scale, Tech Hubs, Recompete Pilot Program, NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership.
- **Department of Energy.** Inflation Reduction Act grants and tax credits (clean energy manufacturing, transmission, grid modernization, weatherization, low-income solar), Bipartisan Infrastructure Law programs (offshore wind transmission, hydrogen hubs, battery manufacturing).
- **HUD.** Community Development Block Grants, HOME Investment Partnerships Program, Section 4 capacity building, Continuum of Care homeless assistance, Lead Hazard Reduction grants, Healthy Homes.
- **VA.** VA construction grants (state veterans homes), HUD-VASH, SSVF, Grant and Per Diem program for transitional housing.

- **NOAA / NSF / NIH.** Sea Grant, Climate Resilience Regional Challenge, NSF research grants (UMES, Salisbury University, Wor-Wic), NIH research grants (UMES, Hopkins partnerships, TidalHealth).
- **DOJ / OJP.** Byrne JAG, COPS Hiring Program, STOP Violence Against Women, Office for Victims of Crime, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- **SBA.** Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers, Veterans Business Outreach Centers, 7(a) and 504 lending, microloan program, 8(a) Business Development Program, State Small Business Credit Initiative.
- **MBDA.** Minority Business Development Agency Business Centers, Capital Readiness Program, federal contracting access for minority-owned firms.
- **NEA / NEH / IMLS.** Arts and humanities project grants, museum and library services grants. Historically a meaningful funding source for MD-01 cultural and historical institutions.

TOOL THREE: STACKING THE MONEY

The most effective rural and small-city development projects in the country combine federal, state, philanthropic, and private dollars in coordinated stacks. A new community health center might combine an HRSA Section 330 grant, USDA Community Facilities financing, a Maryland state grant, a Maryland Community Health Resources Commission grant, foundation funding from the Rauch Foundation or the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and CDFI lending. No single source is enough. Together, the math works. Coordinating those stacks is a function a member of Congress can play that almost no other actor can.

How The Office Will Work The Stack

Quarterly funding stack briefings.

For MD-01 county governments, mayors, hospital CEOs, school superintendents, and major nonprofit directors. Mapping which federal, state, and philanthropic dollars are open at any given time and how they can be combined.

Direct coordination with Maryland state agencies.

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, Maryland Department of Transportation, Maryland Energy Administration, Maryland Department of Commerce, Maryland Department of the Environment, Maryland Department of Health, MSDE. Each is a partner in moving federal dollars on the ground. The office will build standing coordination relationships with each.

Philanthropic alignment.

Maryland and the broader region have major foundations: the Rauch Foundation (long history funding the Eastern Shore), the Annie E. Casey Foundation (Baltimore-based, Maryland focus), the Abell Foundation, the France-Merrick Foundation, the Town Creek Foundation (formerly), and the Mid-Shore Community Foundation. Coordinating foundation interest with federal opportunity multiplies impact.

Public-private partnership development.

For larger projects (offshore wind supply chain at Sparrows Point and Tradepoint Atlantic, Salisbury industrial site readiness, BRAC corridor expansion in Harford), federal dollars work best when paired with private capital. Federal credit enhancement (USDA, SBA, EDA) plus CDFI participation plus private equity creates project finance capacity that a small city cannot

generate on its own.

TOOL FOUR: SAYING NO TO THE WRONG MONEY

Bringing money to a district matters. Bringing the wrong money matters too, in the negative. There are funding sources the office will decline to chase or actively oppose, even when they look good on paper.

Data center subsidies and tax abatements.

Data centers consume massive amounts of water and electricity, employ small permanent workforces, and leave host communities with depleted aquifers and rate increases. The promised "union construction jobs" are largely out-of-state and short-duration. The Plan is a no on data center development in MD-01. (See Brief 5.3 for the longer treatment.)

Fossil fuel infrastructure expansion.

Federal subsidies for new oil and gas pipelines, LNG export terminals, or expanded extraction on federal lands or waters near the Chesapeake. The Bay cannot afford it.

Carceral expansion as economic development.

New federal prisons, detention facilities, or for-profit ICE detention contracts. Some Shore counties have, in the past, treated prisons as economic development. The Plan will not pursue or support that approach.

Industrial agriculture concentration money.

Federal funds that consolidate poultry integrator power at the expense of contract growers, family farmers, or Bay water quality. Federal agricultural support should go to small and Black farmers, conservation, and diversification, not to integrator concentration. (See Brief 3.5.)

Some "investments" extract more from the district than they deliver. The office will turn those down on the merits and explain why, in public, every time.

A . 5

Measuring Success

A funding strategy is only meaningful if it can be measured. The district office will publish, every year, a transparent report including:

- Total CPF requests submitted, projects funded, and dollar amount secured per county.
- Federal grant awards to MD-01 entities, with notation of where the office provided support.
- State and philanthropic dollars co-aligned with federal investments.
- Constituent service metrics: cases opened, federal benefits secured, dollars recovered for constituents, immigration cases supported, veterans benefits cases resolved.

THE BENCHMARK

The benchmark is simple. Every year the office serves, MD-01 should be receiving more federal investment than the year before, and that investment should be reaching every county, not just the ones whose mayors are in the same political circles as the office.

The previous representative directed federal water infrastructure money to a specific Worcester County ZIP code along political lines while bypassing places like West Vienna in Dorchester. That practice ends. Going forward the office serves all eleven counties on equal terms and reports its work publicly each year.

This is what serious work looks like: a congressional office running a real ten-year plan for MD-01. The district has not been treated this seriously in a long time. That changes.

APPENDIX B

Glossary

Federal policy is full of acronyms and procedural terms that obscure what is actually happening. This glossary translates the ones used most across The New Plan, so a reader who wants to verify the substance behind the plain-language framing has the vocabulary in one place.

HOW TO USE THIS GLOSSARY

- Entries are alphabetical, by acronym or short form first.
- Cross-references in *italics* point to related entries.
- Federal programs are followed by the parent agency in parentheses.
- Maryland-specific programs and authorities are noted explicitly as "Maryland's X" or "the state's X."
- Public laws and statutory citations (e.g., P.L. 117-58, 42 U.S.C. § 1437g(g)) are provided where the brief references the underlying statute.

A

8(a) Program. SBA Business Development Program for small businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. Provides federal contracting set-asides.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. Federally funded three-digit crisis line. The Press 1 sub-line routes to veterans services. Press 3 routes to LGBTQI+ youth services.

ACA (Affordable Care Act). 2010 healthcare reform law. Created the marketplace, Medicaid expansion, no-cost contraception coverage, and Section 1557 nondiscrimination protections.

ACEP (Agricultural Conservation Easement Program). USDA NRCS program providing federal cost-share for agricultural land easements (ACEP-ALE) and wetland easements (ACEP-WRE). Pairs with Maryland's MALPF and Rural Legacy to close farm easements on the Eastern Shore.

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act). 1990 civil rights law banning discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, public accommodations, and federally funded programs.

AHRQ (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality). HHS agency. Publishes the National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report.

AIP (Airport Improvement Program). FAA grant program funding airport runway, taxiway, and safety improvements. Funds Salisbury-Ocean City Wicomico Regional and Easton/Newnam Field in MD-01.

ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). United Way's measure of households above the federal poverty line but unable to afford basic costs. Roughly 37 percent of Harford County families fall into ALICE; Lower Shore counties run higher.

Amicus brief. A "friend of the court" filing supporting one side in a lawsuit you are not directly part of. Members of Congress can file these to put their position on the record in pending litigation.

AMI (Area Median Income). Local median household income. Federal housing programs (Section 8, LIHTC) define income eligibility as a percentage of AMI.

APG (Aberdeen Proving Ground). U.S. Army installation in Harford County. Employs more than 21,000 civilian, military, and contractor workers, the largest employer in the county.

Appropriations. Annual federal spending bills. Authorize money for already-authorized programs. Where many policy fights are fought year over year.

B

BIL (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law). 2021 infrastructure investment law (formally the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act). Includes lead service line replacement funding, transit, broadband, and clean energy.

BIP (Bridge Investment Program). Federal Highway Administration competitive grant program for major bridge replacement and rehabilitation. Created by the *BIL*; on the table for the Bay Bridge replacement.

BOEM (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management). Interior Department agency. Permits offshore wind and oil/gas leases on the Outer Continental Shelf.

Bostock v. Clayton County. 2020 Supreme Court ruling that Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

BRF (Maryland Bay Restoration Fund). Maryland's "flush tax" on water bills. The septic-tier portion is split 60 percent for septic upgrades and 40 percent for cover crops. Sunsets in 2030 absent legislative action.

BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities). FEMA's flagship pre-disaster mitigation grant program. Returns roughly \$6 to \$8 in avoided disaster costs for every dollar spent.

Brnovich v. DNC. 2021 Supreme Court ruling that narrowed Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, making it harder to challenge laws that disproportionately burden voters of color.

BSCA (Bipartisan Safer Communities Act). 2022 gun safety law (P.L. 117-159). Funded school-based mental health, narrowed the "boyfriend loophole" in domestic violence firearm prohibitions, and expanded NICS background checks for buyers under 21.

C

CAA 2021 (Consolidated Appropriations Act). Enacted December 27, 2020. Among many provisions, established mental health parity reporting requirements that need stronger enforcement.

CBA (Collective Bargaining Agreement). The union contract that governs working conditions, pay, and grievance rights for employees in a workplace.

CBO (Congressional Budget Office). Nonpartisan agency that scores the budget impact of legislation. Cited heavily in fights over OBBBA, IRA, and reconciliation bills.

CBOC (Community-Based Outpatient Clinic). A smaller VA clinic offering primary care and limited specialty services without being a full hospital.

CDBG (Community Development Block Grant). HUD's flexible block grant to states and local governments. Can fund affordable housing, infrastructure, public services, and local trust-fund capitalization.

CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Federal public health agency. Publishes maternal mortality, vaccine, and gun violence research.

CDFI (Community Development Financial Institution). A federally certified lender that focuses on underserved communities. Often the only capital source for rural and Black-owned small businesses.

CEP (Community Eligibility Provision). USDA program letting Title I schools serve free meals to all students based on Medicaid and SNAP enrollment data, with no individual paperwork.

Byrne JAG. Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program. Federal grants to state and local law enforcement administered by DOJ.

CHIPS Act. 2022 law funding domestic semiconductor manufacturing. Together with the IRA and BIL, the largest federal industrial-policy investment in a generation.

Cloture. The Senate procedure that ends a filibuster. Requires 60 votes in most cases.

CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services). HHS agency that administers Medicare, Medicaid, and the ACA marketplace.

Comstock Act. 1873 anti-obscenity law (18 U.S.C. §§ 1461 and 1462). Banned mailing of contraception, abortion-related materials, and sex education. Roe rendered it dormant. Project 2025 identifies it as a mechanism to ban medication abortion mailing nationwide.

Conditions of Participation. CMS rules every Medicare-participating hospital must follow. Decertification is the strongest accountability tool the federal government has over hospitals.

Conrad 30. Federal program letting each state sponsor up to 30 international physician J-1 visa waivers per year for service in rural and underserved areas. Oversubscribed in Maryland.

Cosponsor. A member of Congress who formally signs onto a bill they did not introduce, signaling support before the vote.

CPF (Community Project Funding). The post-2021 reformed earmark process. Up to 15 specific district projects per fiscal year, transparent and competitive.

CRP (Conservation Reserve Program). USDA program that pays farmers to take environmentally sensitive land out of production.

CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program). USDA program supporting working-lands conservation practices.

D

DDA (Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration). Maryland state agency administering services for people with developmental disabilities. Funded primarily through Medicaid *HCBS* waivers.

DHS (Department of Homeland Security). Created 2003. Houses ICE, CBP, USCIS, FEMA, and Coast Guard.

Dickey Amendment. 1996 federal provision that effectively banned CDC research on gun violence. Substantially lifted in 2018 appropriations.

Dingell-Johnson Act. Sport Fish Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. § 777 et seq.). Federal excise tax on fishing rods, lures, and outboard motors that funds fishing piers, boat ramps, and fish-stocking programs. Companion to *Pittman-Robertson*.

Dobbs v. Jackson. 2022 Supreme Court ruling that overturned *Roe v. Wade*, eliminating the federal constitutional right to abortion.

DRRA (Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018). P.L. 115-254. Created BRIC during the first Trump administration.

E

EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer). Card-based system for delivering SNAP, WIC, and other public assistance benefits.

ED (Department of Education). Cabinet department that administers Federal Student Aid, Title I, IDEA, and OCR. Subject to a March 2025 executive order directing closure.

EDA (Economic Development Administration). Commerce Department agency. Funds local economic development through Public Works grants, Economic Adjustment Assistance, and Tech Hubs.

EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission). Federal agency enforcing employment discrimination law including Title VII and the ADA.

EMTALA. Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (42 U.S.C. § 1395dd). Requires hospital ERs to screen and stabilize every patient regardless of ability to pay.

EO (Executive Order). A written directive from the President to federal agencies. Binding inside the executive branch unless courts or Congress block it. EO 14251 stripped most federal collective bargaining rights in April 2025.

EPA (Environmental Protection Agency). Federal environmental regulatory agency. Administers the Clean Water Act, the Chesapeake Bay Program, the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, and TMDL enforcement.

EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program). USDA conservation cost-share program for farmers.

ERA (Equal Rights Amendment). Constitutional amendment proposed in 1972, ratified by 38 states. President Biden declared it the 28th Amendment in January 2025; the Archivist did not certify and publish.

ERPO (Extreme Risk Protective Order). Maryland's red flag law. Allows a court to temporarily remove firearms from someone in crisis. Saves lives, particularly in domestic violence situations.

ESA (Endangered Species Act). 1973 federal law (16 U.S.C. § 1531 et seq.) protecting species at risk of extinction and the habitat they depend on. Northeastern Beach Tiger Beetle, Bog Turtle, Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon, and Red Knot all have MD-01 habitat under ESA.

ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act). The foundational federal K-12 education law. Houses Title I (low-income schools), Title II (teachers), Title III (English learners), and Title IV-A (student support).

F

FAA (Federal Aviation Administration). USDOT agency. Administers the Airport Improvement Program and the FAA Reauthorization framework for civilian aviation.

Faircloth Amendment. 1998 federal cap on net new public housing (42 U.S.C. § 1437g(g)). Limits each housing authority to the number of units it owned, assisted, or operated on October 1, 1999. The single biggest federal block on adding new deeply affordable units.

Faircloth-to-RAD. HUD administrative program that converts unused *Faircloth Amendment* authority into deeply affordable units through the Rental Assistance Demonstration. The workaround until Faircloth is repealed.

FEHB (Federal Employees Health Benefits). The health insurance program for federal workers and retirees.

FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency). DHS agency administering disaster relief, BRIC mitigation grants, and the Disaster Relief Fund.

FERS (Federal Employees Retirement System). The pension system covering federal employees hired after 1983. Includes a "FERS supplement" bridge payment from retirement age to Social Security eligibility at 62.

FHA (Federal Housing Administration). Federal mortgage insurance program supporting first-time and lower-income homebuyers.

FHWA (Federal Highway Administration). USDOT agency administering the federal-aid highway program, the Bridge Formula Program, the Bridge Investment Program, and the PROTECT resilience program.

Forest Legacy Program. USDA Forest Service program providing federal cost-share for forest conservation easements. Maryland uses it for forest easements in the Pocomoke, Nanticoke, and Choptank watersheds.

FQHC (Federally Qualified Health Center). Federal designation for community health centers serving low-income areas. Funded through HRSA Section 330 grants.

FRA (Federal Railroad Administration). USDOT agency. Administers Amtrak Northeast Corridor capital funding and the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail.

FTA (Federal Transit Administration). USDOT agency. Administers transit formula and capital grants, including Section 5310, 5311, 5307, 5337, and 5339 (see *Section 5311*).

G

GPCI (Geographic Practice Cost Index). The Medicare formula that adjusts physician reimbursement by region. Systematically underpays rural specialists.

Great American Outdoors Act. 2020 federal law (P.L. 116-152) providing permanent full funding for the *LWCF* and a National Parks and Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund. Defended administratively every appropriations cycle.

GusNIP. Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program. Doubles SNAP dollars when used to buy fresh produce at farmers markets and farm stands.

H

HCBS (Home and Community-Based Services).

Medicaid-funded services that let people with disabilities live at home rather than in institutions. Maryland's DDA runs through HCBS waivers.

HHS (Department of Health and Human Services).

Cabinet department administering Medicare, Medicaid, NIH, CDC, FDA, HRSA, and OCR.

HFFI (Healthy Food Financing Initiative). Federal program funding healthy food retail (grocery stores, food cooperatives, farmers market infrastructure) in underserved areas. Reauthorization is H.R. 3506.

Highway Trust Fund. The federal fund that pays for highway and transit programs, financed by the 18.4-cent gas tax and 24.4-cent diesel tax. Not raised since 1993. Heading toward a \$166 to \$199 billion revenue-outlay gap over the next reauthorization.

HOME Investment Partnerships Program. HUD block grant supporting affordable housing development, rehabilitation, tenant rental assistance, and homeownership. Can flow into Local Housing Trust Funds.

HRSA (Health Resources and Services Administration).

HHS agency funding FQHCs, maternal and child health, and rural health.

HUD (Housing and Urban Development). Cabinet department administering Section 8, LIHTC, Community Development Block Grants, Lead Hazard Reduction grants, and HUD-VASH.

HUD-VASH. HUD-VA Supportive Housing. A Section 8 voucher paired with VA case management for homeless veterans. Highest-leverage anti-homelessness intervention available.

Hyde Amendment. Annual appropriations rider since 1976 prohibiting federal Medicaid funding for abortion except in cases of rape, incest, or threat to life.

ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). DHS agency. Conducts immigration enforcement and detention.

IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

Federal special education law. Congress promised 40% of excess special-ed cost in 1975; the actual federal share has hovered around 13%.

IEP (Individualized Education Program). Plan for a student receiving special education services under IDEA.

IJA (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act). The formal name of the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (see *BIL*). Surface transportation authorization expires September 30, 2026.

INFRA. USDOT competitive grant program (Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight and Highway Projects). A potential federal funding stream for the Bay Bridge replacement.

IRA (Inflation Reduction Act). 2022 law that includes Medicare drug-price negotiation, enhanced ACA premium tax credits, and clean energy tax credits.

ITC / PTC. Federal Investment Tax Credit and Production Tax Credit. Anchor the financing of renewable energy projects including offshore wind.

IZ (Inclusionary Zoning). Local ordinance requiring developers of new residential projects to set aside a share of units as below-market affordable housing. Maryland Land Use Article § 7-401 authorizes counties and municipalities to adopt IZ. No MD-01 county has done so.

L

LIHTC (Low-Income Housing Tax Credit). Federal tax credit subsidizing affordable rental housing development. The largest federal program for affordable housing supply.

Local Housing Trust Fund. A county or municipal fund dedicated to affordable housing development, IZ in-lieu fees, tenant-stabilization work, and emergency assistance. Maryland Affordable Housing Trust provides state matching funds. Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, and Baltimore City have established trust funds.

LOTS (Locally-Operated Transit Systems). Maryland's county-level rural transit operators. The five serving MD-01 are Shore Transit, Delmarva Community Transit, Cecil Transit, and Harford Transit Link.

LWCF (Land and Water Conservation Fund). Federal conservation and recreation fund supported by offshore oil and gas revenue. Funds boat ramps, fishing piers, parks, and wildlife management areas. Permanent full funding was secured by the *Great American Outdoors Act* in 2020.

M

MALPF (Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation). Maryland's flagship farm easement program, created 1977. Buys permanent agricultural easements from farmers in exchange for keeping the land in agriculture. Funded through Program Open Space and federal NRCS-ACEP cost-share.

MARBIDCO. Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation. Runs the Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program and related rural-economy lending tools.

MARC. Maryland Area Regional Commuter rail. The Penn Line runs through Aberdeen, Edgewood, and Martin State Airport into Baltimore and Washington. Operated by the *MTA*.

Marine Highway program. USDOT program supporting waterborne freight and passenger routes that relieve roadway congestion. A potential funding source for the Crisfield-Smith Island ferry.

Markup. The committee meeting where members debate and vote on changes to a bill before it can go to the full chamber.

MAWS Act. Mitigation Action and Watermen Support Act (H.R. 4294). Creates a NOAA grant program for blue catfish processing aimed at the pet food and animal feed market. House-passed March 16, 2026; now in the Senate.

MBDA (Minority Business Development Agency). The only federal agency dedicated to minority-owned businesses. Targeted for elimination since January 2025.

MDOT (Maryland Department of Transportation). Maryland's umbrella transportation agency. Includes the State Highway Administration, the Maryland Transit Administration, the Maryland Aviation Administration, the Port Administration, and the MVA.

MDTA (Maryland Transportation Authority). Maryland's toll-facility authority. Owns and operates the Bay Bridge, the Hatem Bridge, the Tydings Bridge, the Key Bridge crossing, and BWI tolls. Separate from the *MTA*.

Mega. USDOT competitive grant program (National Infrastructure Project Assistance) for large, complex multimodal projects. A potential federal funding stream for the Bay Bridge replacement.

MHPAEA. Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008. Requires insurance plans not to put more restrictive limits on mental health care than on physical health care. Enforcement has been weak.

MIHU (Moderate Income Housing Unit). Howard County's inclusionary zoning program. Requires 10 to 15 percent of new residential units to be reserved as below-market affordable housing.

MMP (Maryland Mortgage Program). Maryland's state-run first-time homebuyer pathway. Provides down-payment assistance and below-market mortgage rates for eligible buyers.

Momnibus. Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act (H.R. 7973). Package of bills addressing maternal mortality drivers including doula and midwife integration, postpartum coverage, and workforce shortage.

N

NDAA (National Defense Authorization Act). Annual must-pass defense bill. Frequently used as a vehicle to attach blocked legislation.

NEVI (National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure). Federal formula program funding DC fast-charger build-out along designated corridors. Authorized at \$5 billion over five years under the *BIL*. On the House Republican target list every appropriations cycle.

NIH (National Institutes of Health). Federal medical research agency under HHS. The Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) sits within NIH.

NLRB (National Labor Relations Board). Independent federal agency enforcing private-sector labor law including the right to organize.

O

OBBBA (One Big Beautiful Bill Act). May 2025 reconciliation bill, signed into law July 4, 2025 (P.L. 119-21). Major Republican legislation cutting Medicaid and SNAP, narrowing ACA subsidies, and adding \$3.4 trillion to the deficit over ten years.

Obergefell v. Hodges. 2015 Supreme Court ruling establishing a constitutional right to same-sex marriage. Justice Thomas's 2022 *Dobbs* concurrence invited challenges to it.

MPDU (Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit). Montgomery County's inclusionary zoning program. Created 1974, the country's first IZ program. Requires a 12.5 percent mandatory minimum affordable set-aside; has produced more than 17,300 affordable units.

MTA (Maryland Transit Administration). Maryland's transit operator. Runs MARC commuter rail, the Baltimore Metro, light rail, MTA buses, and oversees locally-operated rural transit systems. Separate from the *MDTA*.

NMAAHC. Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). Federal agency for weather, climate, and ocean services. Includes the National Weather Service, the Chesapeake Bay Office, and Sea Grant.

NPS (National Park Service). Interior Department agency. Administers Underrepresented Communities grants, Save America's Treasures, and the African American Civil Rights Network.

NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service). USDA agency that runs working-lands conservation programs including *ACEP*, *EQIP*, *CSP*, and *CRP*. The federal partner for Maryland farm easements.

OCR (Office for Civil Rights). Federal civil rights enforcement office. Both HHS and the Department of Education have one. Both have been substantially defunded since January 2025.

OPM (Office of Personnel Management). Federal HR agency. Issues FEHB rules, RIF rules, and Schedule F reclassification guidance.

OZ (Opportunity Zone). Federal tax incentive for investment in designated census tracts. Made permanent by the OBBBA. Job creation outcomes have been limited in places like the Lower Shore.

P

PACT Act. 2022 law authorizing \$797 billion over ten years for healthcare for burn pit, Agent Orange, and Gulf War veterans. Andy Harris voted Nay on both House passage votes.

Pell Grant. Federal need-based college grant. Doubling the maximum is the single most consequential federal college affordability lever.

Perkins V. Federal Career and Technical Education funding law. Reauthorized as the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act.

Pittman-Robertson Act. Wildlife Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. § 669 et seq.). Federal excise tax on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment that funds wildlife management areas, hunter education, and shooting ranges. Companion to *Dingell-Johnson*.

POS (Maryland Program Open Space). Maryland's main land conservation funding stream, paid for by the 0.5 percent real estate transfer tax. The 2025 General Assembly diverted \$100 million from POS over four years, with the Eastern Shore taking most of the loss.

R

RAISE. USDOT competitive grant program (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity). A federal funding stream that local jurisdictions can apply for on roads, bridges, transit, and ports.

RBIC (Rural Business Investment Company). USDA program licensing private equity funds to invest in rural small businesses with federal credit support.

Reconciliation. A budget process that lets the Senate pass certain spending and tax bills with 51 votes instead of 60. Has strict rules about what can ride on it.

Preclearance. Voting Rights Act mechanism requiring federal review of voting law changes in jurisdictions with a history of voter suppression. Gutted by *Shelby County v. Holder* in 2013.

PRO Act. Protecting the Right to Organize Act (H.R. 20). Major private-sector labor reform bill including worker classification and right-to-work preemption.

PROTECT. Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation. The *BIL*'s climate-resilience program for highway and transit infrastructure. Funds sea-level-rise adaptation on US-50, US-13, and Smith Island access.

PSLF (Public Service Loan Forgiveness). Federal student loan forgiveness program for borrowers who work 10 years in qualifying public service.

Rent stabilization. A local ordinance capping the rate of annual rent increases. Maryland does not preempt local rent stabilization; Montgomery County and Prince George's County have functioning ordinances. No MD-01 county has adopted one.

RFMA (Respect for Marriage Act). Public Law 117-228 (December 2022). Requires interstate recognition of valid marriages and protects existing marriages, but does not require new same-sex marriage licenses if *Obergefell* falls.

RIF (Reduction in Force). A federal layoff. Has formal procedures around seniority, notice, and severance, which agencies have been bypassing.

RRIF. Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing. USDOT direct loan and loan-guarantee program for rail infrastructure. A potential financing source for the Bay Bridge replacement on the rail side.

S

SAMHSA. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Funds 988 mobile crisis services and Crisis Stabilization Units.

SBA (Small Business Administration). Federal agency administering 7(a), 504, microloan, 8(a), Women's Business Centers, and Veterans Business Outreach Centers.

Schedule F. The proposed reclassification of career civil servants into a status with weaker protections. Allows political loyalty firings.

Section 1557. The ACA's nondiscrimination provision (42 U.S.C. § 18116). Prohibits discrimination in any health program receiving federal funding.

Section 515 / Section 538. USDA Rural Development multifamily housing programs. Section 515 makes direct loans for affordable rural rental housing; Section 538 guarantees private loans for the same purpose.

Section 5310 / 5311 / 5337 / 5339. The core *FTA* transit formula programs. 5310 funds seniors and people with disabilities; 5311 funds rural areas; 5337 funds state of good repair; 5339 funds bus and bus facilities. The operating-cash sources for MD-01's locally-operated transit systems.

T

TEACH Grant. Federal grant for college students who commit to teaching in high-needs schools and subjects.

Tenant union. A membership-based renter organization that bargains collectively over rent increases, maintenance, and eviction protections. Different from a building-level tenant association: a tenant union covers a larger geographic area and negotiates with multiple landlords.

Rural Legacy Program. Maryland program created in 1997 that protects large, contiguous rural landscapes through easements. Administered by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources; pairs with federal NRCS-ACEP cost-share.

Section 8. Federal Housing Choice Voucher program. Pays a share of rent for low-income tenants in privately-owned housing.

Shelby County v. Holder. 2013 Supreme Court ruling that gutted Voting Rights Act preclearance.

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). Federal food assistance program (formerly food stamps). Narrowed by the OBBBA.

SSA (Social Security Administration). Federal agency administering Social Security retirement, disability, and survivor benefits.

SSBCI (State Small Business Credit Initiative). Federal-to-state credit-enhancement program. Helps small businesses access capital that conventional banks will not extend.

SSVF (Supportive Services for Veteran Families). VA program providing rapid rehousing and homelessness prevention services for low-income veteran families.

Stafford Act. Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. § 5121 et seq.). Federal disaster relief authority.

TIFIA. Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act. USDOT direct loan and loan-guarantee program for surface transportation projects. A potential financing source for the Bay Bridge replacement.

Title I. ESEA program funding schools that serve high concentrations of low-income students.

Title VI. Civil Rights Act of 1964 provision banning racial discrimination in federally funded programs (42 U.S.C. § 2000d).

Title VII. Civil Rights Act of 1964 provision banning employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin.

Title VIII. Federal Nursing Workforce Development Program. Authorization expired October 1, 2025; funding hangs on a continuing resolution at \$305 million annually.

Title IX. 1972 federal law banning sex discrimination in federally funded education programs.

Title X. Federal family planning program. Funds contraception and reproductive healthcare for low-income patients.

TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load). Federally enforceable cap on pollutant levels in a body of water, set under the Clean Water Act. The Chesapeake Bay TMDL is administered by EPA.

TPS (Temporary Protected Status). Immigration status for nationals of countries with armed conflict or environmental disaster preventing safe return.

TSP (Thrift Savings Plan). The federal version of a 401(k). The retirement savings account most federal employees use.

U

URDL (Urban-Rural Demarcation Line). Baltimore County's main land-use boundary since 1967. Inside the line, county water and sewer service is available and development is concentrated. Outside the line is rural, with agricultural preservation as the dominant land use. County goal is 80,000 preserved acres.

USACE. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Administers Civil Works including waterways, ports, jetties, and harbor maintenance dredging on the Bay and the Eastern Shore.

USCIS. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. DHS agency administering green cards, naturalization, and work authorization.

USDA. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Administers SNAP, EQIP, CRP, CSP, Rural Development, and the Heirs' Property Relending Program.

USFWS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). Interior Department agency. Administers the National Wildlife Refuge System, including the Chesapeake Marshlands Complex (Blackwater, Eastern Neck, Martin, Susquehanna).

USGS (U.S. Geological Survey). Interior Department agency. Operates the federal water-quality monitoring network whose data underpins TMDL enforcement.

V

VA (Department of Veterans Affairs). Cabinet department administering veterans healthcare and benefits. Lost roughly 28,000 employees in 2025; another 25,000 cuts announced.

VISN. VA's Veterans Integrated Services Network. Regional administrative units that make clinic siting decisions. MD-01 sits in VISN 5.

Voucher (school). Federal or state subsidy redirected to private and religious schools. The OBBBA includes voucher language that could direct \$30 to \$50 billion annually with no civil-rights or accountability strings.

VRA (Voting Rights Act of 1965). Federal voting rights law. Section 2 prohibits voting practices that discriminate on the basis of race; preclearance was gutted by Shelby County v. Holder.

W

WIFIA. Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act. EPA program providing low-interest financing for major water and wastewater infrastructure.

WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act). Federal workforce development law. Funds adult, dislocated worker, and youth employment training programs.

APPENDIX C

Consolidated Bibliography

Sources for every claim made in The New Plan, organized by theme and brief. Bills cite the 119th Congress sponsor and bill number unless otherwise noted; "see *Brief X.Y*" indicates a citation that recurs across briefs and is fully detailed in the named brief.

THEME 01: HONOR THE DEAL WE MADE

Brief 1.1: Bargaining Rights and the Loyalty Test

BILLS

- H.R. 2550, Protect America's Workforce Act (Golden D-ME, Fitzpatrick R-PA). House passed 231-195 on December 11, 2025 (Roll Call 332). **Andy Harris voted Nay**. Senate companion S. 2837 (Sen. Murkowski cosponsoring).
- H.R. 492, Saving the Civil Service Act (Connolly D-VA, Fitzpatrick R-PA, Mfume D-MD, Bacon R-NE). Stuck in House Oversight Committee.

COURT CASES

- AFGE et al. v. Trump (3:25-cv-03698, N.D. Cal.). EO 14251 challenge. Preliminary injunction granted June 24, 2025; 9th Circuit lifted the injunction February 2026.
- AFGE v. VA (1:25-cv-00583, D.R.I.). Master CBA reinstatement. Judge DuBose threatened contempt March 27, 2026.
- PEER v. Trump (8:25-cv-00260, D. Md.). Schedule F challenge in Maryland federal court.
- NTEU v. Trump (1:25-cv-00170, D.D.C.). Schedule F challenge.

SOURCES

- House Clerk vote tally, Roll Call 332, 119th Congress.
- Government Executive, "'Blatant disrespect': Judge contemplates contempt proceedings after VA re-terminated union contract" (March 2026).
- Federal News Network, "VA re-terminates AFGE contract for 300K employees, despite court order to restore it."
- Maryland Governor's Office, federal job loss totals (2025).

Brief 1.2: The Triple Hit: Pay, Health, Retirement

BILLS

- H.R. 1, One Big Beautiful Bill Act (May 2025 reconciliation). Roll Call 145, May 22, 2025. Passed 215-214-1. **Andy Harris voted Present**, the only member of the House to do so.
- H.R. 493, FAIR Act. 4.3% federal employee pay raise for 2026. Sponsor: Rep. Connolly (D-VA).
- House Democratic FY27 pay raise legislation (4.1% raise, introduced February 2026).

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

- OPM call letter to FEHB carriers, March 31, 2026 (MAHA-style cost cuts; gender-affirming care coverage ended for 2026).
- OPM proposed Reduction in Force rule, March 5, 2026 (Federal Register Doc 2026-04377).

- USPS suspension of FERS employer contributions, April 9, 2026.

SOURCES

- House Clerk vote tally, Roll Call 145.
- CBO Publication 61381, "Reconciliation Recommendations of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform."
- NARFE, "Federal Workforce Provisions Dropped from H.R. 1 Prior to Senate Passage" (July 1, 2025).
- Talbot Spy, "Andy Harris stands alone as 'Present' for vote on budget reconciliation bill."

Brief 1.3: The Promise We Made to Veterans

BILLS

- H.R. 2102, Major Richard Star Act (Bilirakis R-FL). 317 House cosponsors, 78 Senate cosponsors. Blocked by Sen. Wicker (R-MS) on unanimous consent twice (Oct 8, 2025 and March 3, 2026).
- HR 3967, PACT Act (House first-passage). Roll Call 57, March 3, 2022. **Andy Harris voted Nay.**
- S. 3373, PACT Act final passage. House Roll Call 309, July 13, 2022. Passed 342-88. **Andy Harris voted Nay.**
- H.R. 1969, No Wrong Door for Veterans Act (Parker Gordon Fox program reauthorization).
- H.R. 136, Veteran Overmedication and Suicide Prevention Act.
- H.R. 2878, Daniel J. Harvey Jr. and Adam Lambert Servicemember Transition Act.
- S. 793, Hannon Mental Health Care Improvement Act reauthorization.

SOURCES

- Bilirakis press release on Star Act reintroduction.
- MOAA Star Act SITREP.
- Senate Veterans Affairs Committee on Wicker block.
- VA workforce reduction data, December 2025 announcement.
- Maryland mental health wait time data (early 2026).

Brief 1.4: A VA That Actually Works on the Eastern Shore

TOOLS AND AUTHORITIES

- VA appropriations process. VA MISSION Act oversight. PACT Act implementation.
- House Veterans Affairs Committee. VA Maryland Health Care System / VISN 5.

ANDY HARRIS RECORD

- Voted Nay on PACT Act on both House passage votes (see Brief 1.3 for full receipts).
- As Freedom Caucus chair, helped force the 43-day government shutdown of October-November 2025.

SOURCES

- VA Maryland Health Care System facility list.
- HUD-VASH program documentation.
- Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families.
- Maryland's Commitment to Veterans (MCV).
- Talbot County Veterans Commission advocacy on Easton CBOC.

Brief 1.5: The Right to Organize

BILLS

- H.R. 20, Protecting the Right to Organize Act (PRO Act). Sponsors: Bobby Scott (D-VA), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Bernie Sanders (I-VT). 47 Senate Democratic cosponsors.
- H.R. 2736, Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act (Norcross D-NJ, Hirono D-HI). Referred to committee April 8, 2025.
- H.R. 2550, Protect America's Workforce Act (see Brief 1.1).

SOURCES

- congress.gov bill records for H.R. 20 and H.R. 2736.
- AFL-CIO scorecard for Andy Harris.
- NLRB regional office.

Brief 1.6: Social Security: You Paid In, You Get Yours

BILLS

- Social Security 2100 Act (multiple versions across Congresses). Lifts or eliminates the wage cap; expands benefits.
- Social Security Expansion Act (Sen. Bernie Sanders).
- H.R. 1, OBBBA (May 2025) FERS supplement provisions (see Brief 1.2). **Andy Harris voted Present.**

SOURCES

- SSA wage base history (ssa.gov/oact/cola/cbb.html).
- SSA Trustees Report (annual).
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP).
- AARP advocacy on Social Security expansion.
- NARFE, "Federal Workforce Provisions Dropped from H.R. 1" (July 1, 2025).

Brief 1.7: The Right to Vote and Be Counted

BILLS

- H.R. 14, John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (119th Congress). Sponsor: Rep. Terri Sewell (D-AL). Reintroduced March 5, 2025.
- S. 2523, Senate companion (Durbin D-IL; cosponsors Warnock, Schumer, Booker). Introduced July 29, 2025.
- H.R. 4 (117th Congress). House Roll Call 260, August 24, 2021. Passed 219-212. **Andy Harris voted Nay.**
- H.R. 4 (116th Congress). House passed December 6, 2019, 228-187. **Andy Harris voted Nay.**

COURT CASES

- Shelby County v. Holder, 570 U.S. 529 (2013). Gutted preclearance.
- Brnovich v. DNC, 594 U.S. 647 (2021). Narrowed Section 2.
- Louisiana v. Callais (2026). Further narrowed Section 2; decided April 29, 2026, 6-3 (Alito majority).

SOURCES

- congress.gov bill record H.R. 14 (119th Congress).
- Sewell press release on H.R. 14 reintroduction (March 5, 2025).
- Brennan Center for Justice voting rights tracker.
- NAACP LDF voting rights resources.

THEME 02: HEALTHCARE IS A HUMAN RIGHT

Brief 2.1: Mothers Shouldn't Die Having Babies

BILLS

- Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act (H.R. 7973, reintroduced March 18, 2026). Lead sponsors: Underwood (D-IL), Adams (D-NC), Booker (D-NJ).
- Healthy MOM Act (H.R. 6242). 12-month postpartum Medicaid. Watson Coleman (D-NJ).
- Healthy Moms and Babies Act (S. 2289).

SOURCES

- CDC maternal mortality data.
- Maryland Maternal Health Innovation Program.
- Black Mamas Matter Alliance.
- March of Dimes Maryland Report Card.
- Black Maternal Health Caucus.

Brief 2.2: Doctors When You Need Them

BILLS

- Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act (H.R. 4731 / S. 2439). Bipartisan.
- Loan Equity for Advanced Professionals Act (H.R. 6574). Restores nursing professional-degree status.
- Professional Degree Access Restoration Act (H.R. 6677 / S. 4039).
- Professional Student Degree Act (H.R. 6718).
- Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act of 2025 (H.R. 3593 / S. 1874).
- Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

- One Big Beautiful Bill Act, July 4, 2025. Eliminated Grad PLUS loans.
- Department of Education proposed rule, November 2025 (RISE rulemaking). Excludes nursing from "professional degree." Effective July 1, 2026 unless intervened.
- Title VIII authorization expiration, October 1, 2025.

SOURCES

- Bureau of Labor Statistics, registered nurses occupational outlook.
- HRSA Health Professional Shortage Areas.
- CMS Maryland Total Cost of Care Model.
- American Nurses Association on the professional degree rule.

Brief 2.3: Care That Treats You Right

BILLS

- Section 1557 enforcement strengthening legislation (private right of action, disparate impact, AG civil actions). Multiple bills introduced in recent Congresses.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. § 18116). 2024 final rule.

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d).
- Americans with Disabilities Act, Title III (42 U.S.C. § 12181 et seq.).
- Age Discrimination Act of 1975.
- Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act, EMTALA (42 U.S.C. § 1395dd).
- CMS Conditions of Participation (42 C.F.R. § 482).
- HIPAA Privacy Rule.

COURT CASES

- Idaho v. United States (2024). Dismissed as improvidently granted; current EMTALA narrowing is administrative under HHS.

STATE FUNDING

- 2026 Maryland Capital Budget appropriation for Kennedy Krieger Eastern Shore: \$5 million (\$2.5M Senate, \$2.5M House).

SOURCES

- HHS Office for Civil Rights.
- AHRQ National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report.
- Institute of Medicine, "Unequal Treatment" (2003).
- Kennedy Krieger Institute.

Brief 2.4: Coverage You Can Count On

BILLS

- Legislation to repeal OBBA Medicaid provisions. Multiple bills in current Congress.
- IRA ACA subsidy permanence legislation. Multiple bills.
- Family glitch statutory fix legislation.
- Medicare eligibility age reduction (standalone bills; Medicare for All variations also include this).
- HCBS Relief Act of 2025 (S. 2076). Closest 119th Congress vehicle for HCBS Access Act priorities.
- Federal HCBS match rate increase legislation.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (Title I, Subtitle B, Part 2; ACA enhanced premium tax credits).
- One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 (P.L. 119-21). Medicaid work requirements; ACA subsidy narrowing.
- Medicaid HCBS waivers under Section 1915(c) and Section 1115 of the Social Security Act.

SOURCES

- Congressional Budget Office analysis of OBBA coverage effects.
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP).
- Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) on ACA subsidies and Medicare Advantage.
- Maryland Department of Health, Medicaid.
- Maryland Health Connection.
- Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration.
- The Arc Maryland.

Brief 2.5: Mental Health, Dental, and Vision for Everyone

BILLS

- Mental Health Parity Act enforcement legislation (multiple bills strengthening 2008 MHPAEA and 2020 CAA reporting requirements).

- Medicare Dental Benefit Act (H.R. 2045 / S. 939 / S. 2084).
- Medicare vision and hearing coverage legislation.
- ACA essential health benefits expansion (adult dental coverage requirement).
- Bipartisan Safer Communities Act reauthorization.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA).
- Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (parity reporting requirements).
- Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022.
- ACA essential health benefits framework.
- OTC Hearing Aid Rule (2022, FDA).

SOURCES

- 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.
- Department of Labor parity enforcement.
- Maryland Insurance Administration.
- KFF on Medicare dental, vision, and hearing.

THEME 03: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Brief 3.1: The Bay and the Polluters Killing It

BILLS

- Federal debarment legislation tying federal contracts and USDA programs to Clean Water Act and Chesapeake Bay TMDL compliance. To be drafted or cosponsored.
- Real-time pollution monitoring legislation for industrial agriculture operations on Bay tributaries.
- Integrator liability legislation.
- Chesapeake Bay Program reauthorization (multiple bills across recent Congresses).
- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law lead service line replacement funding (already enacted; defense fight ongoing).
- PFAS remediation funding expansion (multiple bills).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1251 et seq.).
- Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (Bay TMDL).
- EPA Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.
- Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA).
- USDA EQIP, CRP, CSP.
- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (P.L. 117-58) lead service line replacement provisions.

SOURCES

- EPA Chesapeake Bay Program.
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation.
- ShoreRivers; Waterkeepers Chesapeake; Choptank Riverkeeper.
- Maryland Department of the Environment.

Brief 3.2: Offshore Wind Done Right

BILLS

- Inflation Reduction Act renewable energy provisions (Title III, energy tax credits).
- One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 (P.L. 119-21). Narrowed offshore wind tax credit timelines.
- Federal community-benefits framework legislation for offshore renewable projects.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) offshore wind permitting authority.
- Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act.
- Investment Tax Credit and Production Tax Credit (Internal Revenue Code).

COURT CASES

- Ocean City of Maryland v. BOEM. Filed October 2024. Five claims allowed to proceed July 2025.
- Massachusetts v. Trump (D. Mass.). December 9, 2025 ruling by Judge Saris struck down withdrawal order.
- Delaware Court of Chancery substation permit ruling, March 25, 2026.

SOURCES

- BOEM Maryland Offshore Wind Project page.
- US Wind project page.
- Maryland Energy Administration.
- Maryland Public Service Commission.

Brief 3.3: Climate, FEMA, and Crisfield

BILLS

- Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 (DRRA) (P.L. 115-254). Created BRIC; needs statutory hardening against rescission.
- BRIC reauthorization and statutory protection legislation.
- Disaster declaration objective criteria legislation.
- Sea Grant reauthorization (recurring).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. § 5121 et seq.).
- FEMA Disaster Relief Fund.
- NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge.
- Coastal Zone Management Act.
- BRIC program (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities).

COURT CASES

- Multi-state suit challenging FEMA's BRIC termination (federal district court ruling December 2025).

SOURCES

- FEMA BRIC program.
- Crisfield BRIC project documentation (FEMA award announcement, July 2024).
- Maryland Department of Emergency Management.
- NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge.
- Maryland Sea Grant.

Brief 3.4: Watermen: A Trade Worth Saving

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- NOAA Sea Grant.
- USDA Rural Development.
- Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA).
- SBA 8(a) Business Development Program.
- USDA Value-Added Producer Grant program.
- USDA Section 2501 Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program.
- Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund.

SOURCES

- Vincent Leggett, Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation.
- Imani Black, Minorities in Aquaculture.
- National Trust for Historic Preservation, Watermen Project.
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Commercial Waterman Licensing.
- Maryland Sea Grant.

Brief 3.5: Family Farms in the Future

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- USDA Section 2501 program.
- USDA Heirs' Property Relending Program.
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP); Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).
- USDA Microloan, FSA Beginning Farmer, Value-Added Producer Grants.
- Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP).
- Healthy Food Financing Initiative.
- USDA Local Agriculture Market Program.
- USDA Farm Service Agency; USDA Rural Development.

SETTLEMENTS

- *Pigford v. Glickman* (1999) and *Pigford II* (2010). Discrimination against Black farmers by USDA.

SOURCES

- USDA Farm Service Agency; USDA Risk Management Agency; USDA Food Access Research Atlas.
- Maryland Department of Agriculture; Maryland Farm Bureau.
- National Black Farmers Association; Federation of Southern Cooperatives.

Brief 3.6: The Land Worth Keeping

BILLS

- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL / Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act), Public Law 117-58, 2021. Chesapeake Bay Program \$238M over five years. Authorization expires September 30, 2026.
- MAWS Act, Mitigation Action and Watermen Support Act (H.R. 4294). Sponsors: Rep. Sarah Elfreth (D-MD-03), Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA-01). Cosponsors: Hoyer, Kiggans. Passed House March 16, 2026; now in Senate.

- Blue catfish FDA inspection transfer legislation (multiple bills across recent Congresses). To be confirmed and cosponsored.
- Land and Water Conservation Fund permanent funding (Great American Outdoors Act, P.L. 116-152, signed 2020). Defense legislation to block administrative diversion.
- Farm Bill Title II conservation programs (CRP, EQIP, CSP, ACEP) reauthorization. Current extension through September 30, 2026.
- USDA Forest Legacy Program (annual appropriations).
- Endangered Species Act defense legislation (multiple bills against narrowing).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- EPA Chesapeake Bay Program. Federal coordination of Bay restoration across MD, VA, PA, DE, WV, NY, DC.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wildlife Refuge System.
- National Park Service.
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP-ALE, ACEP-WRE), EQIP, CSP, CRP.
- USDA Forest Service: Forest Legacy Program.
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).
- Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. § 669 et seq.).
- Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. § 777 et seq.).
- Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (Duck Stamp).
- Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. § 1531 et seq.).

MARYLAND AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- Maryland Program Open Space (POS). 0.5 percent real estate transfer tax.
- Maryland Rural Legacy Program (created 1997).
- Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) (created 1977).
- MARBIDCO Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program.
- Maryland Bay Restoration Fund (BRF). Septic-tier split 60 percent septic upgrades / 40 percent cover crops. Sunsets 2030 absent legislative action.
- Baltimore County Urban-Rural Demarcation Line (URDL). Established 1967.

SOURCES

- League of Conservation Voters, Member of Congress page, Andy Harris (lcv.org/moc/andy-harris).
- Funding Landscape on IJJA cliff (fundinglandscape.com/answers/infrastructure-ijja-funding-2026).
- Transportation For America, "Five Reasons Why IJJA Will Expire Without a Replacement in September 2026" (July 2025).
- EPA Chesapeake Bay Program (epa.gov/climate-change-water-sector/chesapeake-bay-program-cbp).
- Friends of Blackwater NWR on staff cuts (friendsofblackwater.org).
- Star Democrat on Eastern Neck NWR staffing (stardem.com).
- Harford Land Trust on Program Open Space cuts (harfordlandtrust.org/program-open-space-2026).
- Eastern Shore Land Conservancy on POS cuts (eslc.org/md-budget-cuts-target-land-conservation).
- Maryland Department of the Environment, Bay Restoration Fund (mde.maryland.gov).
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Rural Legacy Program (dnr.maryland.gov).
- Maryland Department of Agriculture, MALPF (mda.maryland.gov/Pages/malpf.aspx).
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation on blue catfish inspection (cbf.org, March 2021).
- Elfreth press release on MAWS Act House passage (elfreth.house.gov).

- Bay Journal on the pet food approach to blue catfish (bayjournal.com).
- Baltimore County Master Planning history (baltimorecountymd.gov/departments/planning/masterplanning/history).
- Baltimore County land preservation goals (CitizenPortal.ai).

THEME 04: LIFE AND LIBERTY

Brief 4.1: Your Body, Your Decision

BILLS

- Women's Health Protection Act (H.R. 12, Chu D-CA; S. 2150, Baldwin D-WI). Reintroduced June 24, 2025.
- Stop Comstock Act (S. 951, Cortez Masto, Smith, Warren; H.R. 2029, Balint).
- EACH Act (S. 2377, 119th Congress). Repeals the Hyde Amendment.
- Right to Contraception Act (S. 422 / H.R. 999).
- Right to IVF Act / Protect IVF Act (S. 2035).
- Freedom to Travel for Health Care Act.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Comstock Act (18 U.S.C. §§ 1461 and 1462). 1873.
- Hyde Amendment (1976, annual appropriations rider).
- NIH Revitalization Act of 1993; NIH Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH).

COURT CASES

- Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113 (1973). Overturned 2022.
- Planned Parenthood v. Casey, 505 U.S. 833 (1992). Overturned 2022.
- Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, 597 U.S. 215 (2022).
- Griswold v. Connecticut, 381 U.S. 479 (1965). Currently invited to be reconsidered (Justice Thomas, Dobbs concurrence).

SOURCES

- CDC reproductive health.
- Guttmacher Institute on post-Dobbs landscape.
- KFF on medication abortion and the Comstock Act.
- Project 2025 (Mandate for Leadership), policy roadmap.
- Georgia maternal mortality review committee findings (Amber Nicole Thurman and Candi Miller cases).

Brief 4.2: LGBTQIA+ Lives, Lived Out Loud

BILLS

- Equality Act (H.R. 15, Takano D-CA; S. 1503, Merkley, Baldwin, Booker). Reintroduced April 29, 2025.
- Joint Resolution Affirming the ERA (H.J.Res. 80 / S.J.Res. 38, March 2025).
- Respect for Marriage Act (Public Law 117-228, December 13, 2022).
- Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act (Public Law 111-84, 2009).
- LGBTQ+ Panic Defense Prohibition Act (H.R. 4197 / S. 2201).
- Therapeutic Fraud Prevention Act / conversion therapy ban (H.R. 3243 / S. 1663).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq., Title VII).
- Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. § 3601 et seq.).
- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.
- Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (cross-reference Brief 2.3).

COURT CASES

- *Bostock v. Clayton County*, 590 U.S. ____ (2020).
- *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 576 U.S. 644 (2015).
- *Davis v. Ermold* (cert denied November 10, 2025).
- *Coleman v. Miller*, 307 U.S. 433 (1939). Congress determines amendment ratification validity.
- *Dobbs v. Jackson*, 597 U.S. 215 (2022). Justice Thomas concurrence inviting challenges.

SOURCES

- Human Rights Campaign tracking of fatal violence against transgender and gender-nonconforming people.
- HHS Office for Civil Rights.
- National Archives on the ERA.
- ACLU LGBTQ+ project.

Brief 4.3: An Immigration System That Actually Works**BILLS**

- ICE oversight legislation (body cameras, IG oversight, criminal accountability).
- Real Courts, Rule of Law Act (H.R. 7836). Article I immigration courts.
- American Dream and Promise Act (H.R. 1589). Pathway for Dreamers and TPS holders.
- U.S. Citizenship Act framework. Comprehensive reform.
- H-2A and H-2B reform legislation.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, as amended.
- DHS, USCIS, ICE, CBP authorities.
- Executive Office for Immigration Review (immigration courts under DOJ).

SOURCES

- Immigration court backlog data (TRAC Syracuse).
- DHS Office of Inspector General reports on detention conditions.
- Department of Labor H-2B program documentation.
- USCIS processing times.

Brief 4.4: Gun Safety**BILLS**

- Bipartisan Background Checks Act (H.R. 18). Universal background checks.
- Assault Weapons Ban (H.R. 3115 / S. 1531).
- Keep Americans Safe Act (H.R. 1674 / S. 803). High-capacity magazines.
- Federal Extreme Risk Protection Order Act (H.R. 7599); ERPO Expansion Act (H.R. 4252 / S. 889).

- Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022 (Public Law 117-159) reauthorization.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Gun Control Act of 1968.
- Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993.
- Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022 (Public Law 117-159).
- Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) Program.
- COPS Hiring Program (Department of Justice).
- Dickey Amendment (1996; effectively lifted in 2018 appropriations).

SOURCES

- Maryland State Police firearm fatality data.
- Maryland Coalition Against Gun Violence.
- Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence.
- Everytown for Gun Safety state scorecard.

Brief 4.5: Black History Is American History

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- National Park Service Underrepresented Communities Grant Program.
- African American Civil Rights Network.
- Save America's Treasures.
- African American Burial Grounds Preservation Act (P.L. 117-328, Division DD, Section 643).
- USDA Heirs' Property Relending Program (cross-reference Brief 3.5).

SOURCES

- Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park.
- Reginald F. Lewis Museum.
- Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.
- Maryland Historical Trust.
- Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture.

THEME 05: THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Brief 5.1: Schools That Work

BILLS

- IDEA Full Funding Act (H.R. 2598, Huffman; S. 1277, Van Hollen).
- Expanding Access to School Meals Act of 2025 (H.R. 2680 / S. 1431).
- College for All Act of 2025 (H.R. 3543 / S. 1832).
- PELL Act of 2025 (S. 1683).
- Pay Teachers Act (S. 2481); Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence reauthorization (S. 3433).
- Strengthening HBCU and 1890 land-grant funding legislation.
- Perkins V Career and Technical Education reauthorization.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, including Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV-A).
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- Higher Education Act, including Pell Grant and PSLF provisions.
- Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V).

SOURCES

- Department of Education Office for Civil Rights.
- Maryland State Board of Education.
- Maryland Inspector General for Education.
- ACLU of Maryland Somerset County litigation.
- 2023 federal letters on 1890 land-grant HBCU underfunding (USDA / Department of Education).
- Civil Rights Data Collection.

Brief 5.2: Towns Worth Staying In**BILLS**

- Federal source-of-income discrimination legislation: Fair Housing Improvement Act (S. 2827 / H.R. 5443); Housing Choice Voucher Mobility Demonstration Act (H.R. 206); Choice in Affordable Housing Act (H.R. 3133); Discrimination Among Housing Voucher Holders Act (S. 934).
- Rental screening reform: Fair Tenant Screening Act (H.R. 4369); Rental Application Fee Reduction Act (H.R. 4100); related provisions in S. 1465.
- Eviction Right to Counsel Act of 2025 (H.R. 4761 / S. 2463).
- Neighborhood Homes Investment Act (H.R. 2854 / S. 1686).
- Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act / LIHTC expansion (H.R. 2725 / S. 1515).
- Faircloth Amendment repeal legislation (current 119th Congress vehicle to be confirmed). Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez carried the 2020 House-passed amendment.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. § 3601 et seq.).
- Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.
- Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC).
- HUD Housing Quality Standards; Healthy Homes Program; Lead Hazard Reduction Grant Program.
- Federal Housing Administration (FHA) homeownership programs.
- Faircloth Amendment to the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-276), codified at 42 U.S.C. § 1437g(g). Caps net public housing at October 1, 1999 levels.
- HUD Faircloth-to-RAD program (administrative workaround converting unused Faircloth authority into deeply affordable units).

MARYLAND AUTHORITIES

- Maryland HOME Act, Md. State Government § 20-702. Source-of-income discrimination ban (Maryland is one of 23 states with this protection).
- Maryland Mortgage Program (MMP). State-run first-time homebuyer pathway.

SOURCES

- HUD; HUD Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes.

- Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development.
- National Low Income Housing Coalition.
- Maryland Legal Aid.
- Maryland Commission on Civil Rights, Source of Income Guidance (August 2025).
- National Coalition for the Homeless on the Faircloth Amendment (nationalhomeless.org/repeal-faircloth-amendment).
- HUD Faircloth-to-RAD program documentation (radresource.net).
- Children's HealthWatch on housing instability cost (childrenshealthwatch.org/housing). \$111 billion 10-year cost frame.
- UnitedForALICE, Maryland county reports (unitedforalice.org/county-reports/maryland).
- Hunter Baker, "Combating Harford's Housing Crisis," Master's Capstone, American Public University System (February 2026). Source paper for the ALICE, Faircloth, and Harford voucher waitlist data points.

Brief 5.3: Real Jobs Here, Not Just Anywhere

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- CHIPS and Science Act of 2022.
- Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (manufacturing tax credits).
- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law / Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021.
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- Economic Development Administration (EDA) Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance grants.
- Opportunity Zone tax benefits (Internal Revenue Code Section 1400Z).
- Registered Apprenticeship under Department of Labor.
- GSA federal cloud contracts; DOD computing requirements.

SOURCES

- Department of Commerce CHIPS implementation.
- Economic Development Administration.
- Department of Labor apprenticeship.
- PJM Interconnection.
- Maryland Department of Commerce.

Brief 5.4: Help for Small and Black-Owned Businesses

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- Small Business Administration (SBA) 7(a), 504, microloan programs.
- SBA 8(a) Business Development Program.
- Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA).
- State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI).
- Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund.
- USDA Rural Business Investment Program (RBIC).
- USDA Rural Development.

SOURCES

- SBA.
- Maryland Capital Enterprises.

- Maryland Black Chamber of Commerce.
- Salisbury Wicomico Economic Development.
- Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore.

Brief 5.5: Get Where You're Going

BILLS

- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL / Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act), Public Law 117-58, signed November 15, 2021. Surface transportation authorization expires September 30, 2026. Total ~\$567B over five years. **Andy Harris voted Nay** (House Roll Call 369, November 5, 2021), the only Maryland House member to do so.
- Surface Transportation Reauthorization (FY2027 onward). To be drafted; the central transportation bill of the next Congress.
- FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Public Law 118-63. Five-year authorization through FY2028.
- Federal Marine Highway and Ferry Boat formula reauthorization vehicles (multiple bills across recent Congresses).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA): Federal-Aid Highway Program, Bridge Formula Program, Bridge Investment Program (BIP), Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program, Carbon Reduction Program, PROTECT resilience program, Safe Streets and Roads for All.
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA): Section 5310 (Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities), Section 5311 (Rural Areas), Section 5307 (Urbanized Areas), Section 5337 (State of Good Repair), Section 5339 (Bus and Bus Facilities), Capital Investment Grants.
- National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program. \$5B over five years.
- Federal Railroad Administration (FRA): Amtrak Northeast Corridor capital, Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail.
- USDOT competitive multimodal grants: RAISE, INFRA, Mega.
- USDOT credit programs: TIFIA, RRIF.
- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA): Airport Improvement Program (AIP).
- USACE Civil Works (waterways, ports, jetties, harbor maintenance).
- NOAA Marine Highway program.
- Highway Trust Fund (gas tax 18.4¢/gallon, diesel 24.4¢/gallon; not raised since 1993).

MARYLAND AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT): SHA (highways), MTA (transit and MARC), MAA (airports), Port Administration, MVA.
- Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA): Bay Bridge, Hatem Bridge, Tydings Bridge, Key Bridge replacement, BWI tolls.
- Maryland Transit Administration: MARC Penn Line, locally-operated transit systems oversight.
- Locally-operated transit systems (LOTS): Shore Transit, Delmarva Community Transit, Cecil Transit, Harford Transit Link.

SOURCES

- House Clerk roll call records (clerk.house.gov/Votes).
- Bay Crossing Study (baycrossingstudy.com).
- Maryland Transportation Authority (mdta.maryland.gov).
- Maryland NEVI Plan (evplan.mdot.maryland.gov/nevi-program).
- MTA Locally Operated Transit Systems (mta.maryland.gov/lots).
- Aberdeen Proving Ground compatibility plan (militarycompatibility.maryland.gov).
- CRS Report R47573, Highway Trust Fund (congress.gov).
- CRS Report R48845, Surface Transportation Reauthorization (congress.gov).

- Transportation for America, FY26 THUD analysis (t4america.org, January 2026).
- Engineering News-Record, "Maryland Advances Bay Bridge Replacement Plan" (enr.com).
- Capital News Service Maryland, on Maryland's IJA share (November 9, 2021).
- Common Sense Eastern Shore, on Harris IJA credit-claiming (commonsenseeasternshore.org).
- Office of Andy Harris, press release opposing Bay Bridge toll hikes (harris.house.gov).
- SBYbiz on the Wicomico FY26 AIP grant for Salisbury-Ocean City Wicomico Regional Airport (sbybiz.org).
- Bay Journal on Hooper's Island sea-level coverage (bayjournal.com).

Brief 5.6: Houses People Can Live In

BILLS

- Faircloth Amendment repeal legislation (current 119th Congress vehicle to be confirmed). Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez carried the 2020 House-passed amendment (see Brief 5.2).
- Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act (H.R. 2725 / S. 1515). LIHTC expansion with rural set-aside (see Brief 5.2).
- HOME Investment Partnerships Program reauthorization legislation.
- Tenant union and retaliatory eviction protection legislation (multiple bills across recent Congresses).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- Faircloth Amendment to the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-276), codified at 42 U.S.C. § 1437g(g).
- HUD Public Housing Capital Fund and Operating Fund.
- HUD Faircloth-to-RAD program.
- HUD HOME Investment Partnerships Program.
- HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.
- Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC).
- USDA Rural Development Section 515 (multifamily) and Section 538 (multifamily loan guarantee) programs.
- Treasury CDFI Fund.

MARYLAND AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- Maryland Land Use Article § 7-401. State authority for counties and municipalities to adopt inclusionary zoning.
- Maryland State Government § 20-702. HOME Act, source-of-income discrimination ban (see Brief 5.2).
- Maryland Affordable Housing Trust. State-level matching fund for Local Housing Trust Funds.
- Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

MARYLAND COMPARATOR JURISDICTIONS

- Inclusionary zoning: Montgomery County (MPDU, 1974), Howard County (MIHU), Baltimore City (Ordinance 24-308, July 2024), Annapolis, Frederick City, Gaithersburg, Rockville, Charles County, Frederick County, Anne Arundel County.
- Rent stabilization: Montgomery County (Bill 15-23, July 2023, lesser of CPI+3% or 6%), Prince George's County (CB-055-2024, September 2024, lesser of CPI+3% or 6%, with 4.5% / CPI cap on senior housing).
- Local Housing Trust Funds: Montgomery County, Howard County, Prince George's County, City of Baltimore.
- Public housing: 24 Maryland Public Housing Authorities operating ~14,000 units statewide. MD-01: Havre de Grace Housing Authority operating Somerset Manor (60 units).

SOURCES

- Hunter Baker, "Combating Harford's Housing Crisis," Master's Capstone, American Public University System (February 2026). Source paper for the comparative policy analysis and the four-tool framework.
- Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, 2025 Housing Needs Assessment (dhcd.maryland.gov).

- Montgomery County DHCA Rent Stabilization (montgomerycountymd.gov).
- Prince George's County, Permanent Rent Stabilization and Protection Act (princegeorgescountymd.gov).
- Howard County Moderate Income Housing Unit / MIHU (howardcountymd.gov).
- National Coalition for the Homeless on the Faircloth Amendment (nationalhomeless.org).
- HUD Faircloth-to-RAD program documentation (radresource.net).
- Common Dreams on the AOC 2020 Faircloth repeal vote (commondreams.org, July 2020).
- Md. Code, Land Use § 7-401, state IZ authority (law.justia.com).
- Havre de Grace Housing Authority (hdgha.org).