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PHOTO COURTESY THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® (PGCAR)

Pictured from left to right: Valecia Maclin-Topping, Eden Oyelakin, Isabelle Becraft, Horayn Gibson, Alyssa Tyson, Gerald Carter, Donald Frederick, PGCAR Chair of Scholarship Committee, and Carole Webb, 2026 PGCAR President

County REALTORS® Award \$10,500 in Scholarships to High School Seniors

By PRESS OFFICER
Prince George's County Association of REALTORS®

On May 6, 2026, The Prince George's County Association of REALTORS® (PGCAR) awarded \$10,500 in college scholarships to deserving high school graduates. Through the REALTORS® David and Juanita Maclin Memorial Scholarship Fund, named in memory of PGCAR's 2006 President, David Maclin, and his wife, REALTOR® Juanita Maclin. The fund awarded four \$2,500 college scholarships plus an additional Honorable Mention Scholarship of \$500.

David and Juanita contributed to the economic development of Prince George's County, and they were key contributors to the

growth and development of area churches. Their efforts were acknowledged by numerous awards, certifications, and special recognitions.

It is because of their many contributions to the community that the Prince George's County Association of REALTORS® established the David & Juanita Maclin Memorial Scholarship Fund in 2008. Based on the theme "How I Made a Difference in My Community," the Scholarship Fund awards college scholarships to Prince George's County High School seniors who are actively engaged in giving back to their communities. "Unlike traditional ac-

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PGCPS Kicks off 2026 Graduation Season With Landmark Bowie State Partnership

By PRESS OFFICER
Prince George's County Public Schools

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (May 14, 2026)—Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) 2026 graduation ceremonies began Friday, May 15, following a May 1 season kickoff marked by district-wide "Decision Day" celebrations and the announcement of a landmark direct-admissions partnership with Bowie State University.

The new partnership with Bowie State University (BSU) establishes a "fast-track" direct-admissions program for eligible PGCPS seniors. By removing traditional barriers such as application fees, essays, and recommendation letters, the initiative creates a seamless pathway to higher education. Seniors with a minimum 3.0 GPA are eligible for the program, which includes coordinated support for FAFSA completion.

"This partnership with Bowie State University represents a monumental homecoming for our students' dreams," said Interim Superintendent Dr. Shawn

Joseph. "We are ensuring the excellence cultivated in our hallways becomes the leadership that drives our county forward."

As part of the launch, Bowie State has already awarded more than 600 scholarships to PGCPS seniors for the fall 2026 semester. Totalling more than \$1.6 million, the scholarship funding was made possible in part by historic donations from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott.

"The fast-track admissions program creates a clear and supportive pathway to a four-year degree," said Dr. Aminta H. Breaux, president of Bowie State University. "We are strengthening the talent pipeline that fuels our local workforce and advancing Bowie State's role as an anchor institution."

Formal graduation ceremonies began Friday, May 15 with the Academy of Health Sciences at Prince George's Com-

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Laurel High School Students Win Prince George's County 2026 Envirothon Competition for the 5th Year in a Row!

By PRESS OFFICER
Prince George's Soil Conservation District

BRANDYWINE, Md. (May 8, 2026)—The Prince George's Soil Conservation District (PGSCD) is pleased to announce that for the fifth year in a row, Laurel High School won first-place honors in the 2026 Prince George's County Envirothon Competition. Eleanor Roosevelt High School returned to this year's competition and placed second. The Envirothon provides a fun and exciting way for high school students to learn about natural resources, make informed decisions about the environment, and earn scholarship money for college. The event is a problem-solving competition that challenges students to work collaboratively to answer questions and conduct hands-on projects focusing on natural resource issues. The goal is to increase students' environmental knowledge and understanding, while also motivating young people to care for the environment by

practicing stewardship in their homes, schools, and communities.

PGSCD and the William S. Schmidt Outdoor Education Center hosted this year's event at the Schmidt Center on April 29, 2026. Seventeen teams (84 students) from eleven schools in Prince George's County were tested in five categories: aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and this year's fifth issue, "Non-point Source Pollution: It Begins at Home!" Participating high schools were Academy of Health Sciences at Prince George's Community College, Crossland High School, Eleanor Roosevelt High School, Fairmont Heights High School, Frederick Douglas High School, Gwynn Park High School, High Point High School, Laurel High School, Oxon Hill High School, and Potomac High School.

"We are extremely proud of the students who competed in the 2026 Prince George's County Envirothon competition. Congratulations to the winning team from Laurel High School and to the runners-up from Eleanor Roosevelt High School," said Steven E.



COURTESY PHOTO

Laurel High School Students with their Envirothon coach

Darcey, PGSCD's District Manager. "This year's program was a great success thanks to the hard work and dedication of the local Envirothon coordinators, resource specialists, coaches, and sponsors."

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PHOTOS COURTESY BOWIE HIGH SCHOOL NJROTC

BOWIE NJROTC: Special Olympics 2026

By PAO C/SA HENDERSON
Bowie High School NJROTC

On April 30, 2026, the Bowie High School NJROTC Battalion volunteered in the 2026 Special Olympics event held at Charles Herbert Flowers High School. The event brought together students, volunteers, and families for a well-organized day of friendly competition and community involvement. Cadets got the opportunity to step into meaningful roles as they guided their buddies across the field, helped them transition between activities, and most importantly, made them feel seen, supported, and celebrated. Throughout the day, there was a continuous flow of activity, teamwork, and excitement.

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TOWNS *and* NEIGHBORS

Brandywine-Aquasco by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

THE MIGHTY WONDERS OF AQUASCO MARYLAND

Our history-making Gospel Singer, The Mighty Wonders, which included members of Christ United Methodist Church, Aquasco, Maryland and Nottingham Myers United Methodist Church Upper Marlboro, Maryland. Stepping on Board with The Mighty Wonders of Aquasco, Maryland.

Members included Harry Bazemore, Ralph Contee, Sidney Contee, Thomas Contee, Grafton Glascoe, Alfred Johnson, Jr., Alfred Johnson, Sr., Ernest Johnson, Jr., Phillip Johnson, Dennis Lee, John Stewart, Jim Taylor, Lowell Washington.

“Contee graciously spoke with me for the next half hour, sharing the story of how he joined the band, the recording of the 45 (“Old Ship of Zion”) and its flipside. (“How Far Am I From Canaan?”) and the names of the remaining members of the group.”

“Contee said he joined the group in 1970, a few years after its formation. As they gained more attention in the local area, they decided to record a 45 and sell it as a fundraiser for the band. That 45 was the “Old Ship/Canaan” pressing, recorded in 1971 or 1972. The group sold the 45 at concerts and to family members, but aside from word of mouth, they made no attempt to get radio play for the songs and relied on “love offerings” from the churches where they performed as payment for their services. “Contee said one early goal was to buy matching suits “shirts, ties, the whole thing” for all members of the group because they saw it as a way to increase their professional appearance and bring them closer together.”

“The Mighty Wonders were a close-knit group, according to Contee. They had to be because from early fall through early summer for years they were performing up to three programs every Sunday in churches around the Baltimore area. None of the members had any formal training in singing or performing. They simply took what they had seen at their home churches and broadened it into a multi-part vocal group. They took turns singing as lead, with two members, John Stewart and Alfred Johnson doing the honors more often than the others. But Contee said, on some occasions a member would know a song better than the others, and he would step up to take the lead for that particular song or performance. All in all, it was a way for the men to sing the songs they liked in the style they liked, and it suited them well.” By Eric Ames on February 12, 2015.

THE BLACK GOSPEL MUSIC RESTORATION PROJECT

The Black Gospel Music Restoration Project was established in 2008 and is directed by Baylor Associate Professor Robert Darden. Since 2008, Baylor University librarians have digitized over 8,381 songs. Dwandalyn Reece, curator of the National Mu-

seum of African American History and Culture, is so excited about the efforts of Baylor University’s Black Gospel Music Restoration Project. The project’s ultimate goal is to create a digital copy of every song released by every Black gospel artist or group during the “Golden Age of Gospel” that spanned the 1940s to the 1980s.

“The Old Ship of Zion” by the Mighty Wonders of Aquasco, Maryland is one of these recordings. Darden and his team believe the record was cut around 1960 in one of Aquasco’s tiny street-corner studios. Darden sees the song as an example of the regional importance of Gospel. “Maryland was the site of numerous plantations in the Civil War era and some of the worst events during the Civil Rights era,” he explained. “In the middle of all that, this group goes into the studio and cuts this song that says three times, ‘There’s nothing but love in God’s water.’ That you can sing an inclusive song like that during times like those in a place like that, well, that’s pretty special.” The Black Gospel Music Restoration Project’s copy of the Mighty Wonders album is one of only two known to exist. (3) Footnotes: ‘Old Ship of Zion’ by The Mighty Wonders-You Tube. Stepping on Board with The Mighty Wonders of Aquasco, Maryland-The Baylor Digital Collections Blog. NMAAHC Welcomes Gospel Recordings from Baylor University I Smithsonian Music.

FAMILY DAY DUELING PIANO SHOW

Join us at Bobby McKey’s (<https://bobbymckey.com/kid-steen-show-tickets>) May 30, 2026, 3:30–6 p.m. as we open up our all-request live music show to a monthly family-friendly event. Teams of pianists take your song requests and perform with a blend of improvisational humor. This show will have everyone engaged, singing, clapping and dancing the afternoon away. Littles won’t be expected to sit still and are encouraged to wiggle in their seats and get up and move. The high energy performance appeals to guests of all ages, because the show is run by your song selections. The ticketing for this afternoon soiree includes a buffet meal and non-alcoholic beverages. A great option for celebrating Birthdays, Team events, or Scouting parties. The bar will be open for guests 21+. Best for ages 1–101. Leave your inhibitions and worries at the door and get ready to party, sing, dance, and laugh the night away at Bobby McKey’s Dueling Piano Bar combines live music, comedy, and audience interaction. Address is National Harbor, 172 Fleet Street, National Harbor, Maryland. Buy your tickets now.

In and Around Morningside-Skyline

With Mary McHale, will return soon!

University of Maryland Extension Offers “Building a Better You” Program to Optimize Health for Older Adults

By PRESS OFFICER
University of Maryland Extension

A new program developed by University of Maryland Extension (UME) is taking a comprehensive approach to healthy aging—one that recognizes wellness as more than just physical health. The initiative, Building a Better You: Wellness for 50+, is designed specifically for adults aged 50 and older to improve both longevity and quality of life through a multi-dimensional model of wellness.

The program, developed by Mona Habibi, Family & Consumer Sciences educator and principal investigator on the project and Shauna Henley, food safety educator, is rooted in understanding the eight dimensions of wellness—physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual, occupational, environmental, and financial—and addressing these areas together is key to helping individuals not only live longer, but live better.

“We know that for good wellness, you need all parts of the puzzle,” said Henley. “In the past, we were limited in what we could teach. Now, we’re bringing every-

thing together.”

Initially funded by a Maryland Agriculture Experiment Station grant, the launch of Building a Better You comes at a critical time. By 2030, the population of older adults in the United States is expected to increase dramatically, with Maryland reflecting similar trends. Collaborating with co-PI Dorothy Nuckols, financial wellness educator, as well as other UME Family & Consumer Sciences colleagues across specialties including mental health, nutrition, food safety, health insurance literacy, and personal finance, this interdisciplinary approach addresses myriad wellness concerns for older adults.

“As we get older, there are more challenges—chronic disease management, food safety risks, financial vulnerability, and unique emotional challenges,” Habibi said. “We want to equip Marylanders with tools to navigate these.”

The programming itself was developed based on a needs assessment survey of Maryland’s older adult population and key stakeholders, ensuring classes reflect real needs and can be realistically implemented. “We wanted the older adult community to

guide what we created,” Henley said. “This program is truly shaped by their input.”

The result is a four-session series that can be delivered weekly, in person or online. Each session includes a 60-minute interactive presentation, discussion opportunities, and take-home materials. The program also emphasizes social connection, giving participants time to share experiences and learn from one another—an often-overlooked aspect of wellness.

Building a Better You: Wellness for 50+ is offered in partnership with the Maryland Department of Aging, Area Agencies on Aging, senior centers, and community organizations. Organizers are also prioritizing accessibility, offering both in-person and virtual options to reach homebound individuals and those still in the workforce.

“We want to be able to return to the same communities with new content,” Habibi said. “That way, participants can continue building their knowledge and skills year after year.”

To learn more about UME’s Family and Consumer Science programs, go to <https://extension.umd.edu/programs/family-consumer-sciences/>.

- **Academy of Health Sciences at Prince George’s Community College:** For the first time in school history, three seniors—Nyonna Nash, Elizabeth Osunjimi, and Arianna Okonu—tied for valedictorian.
- **International High School at Langley Park:** Valedictorian Khatira Rustami, a refugee from Afghanistan and the first in her family to graduate high school, accepted a full scholarship to George Washington University after also gaining admission to Stanford.
- **Crossland High School:** O’Marie Barnes, a senior and Student Member of the State Board of Education, received a full scholarship to Harvard University.
- **Frederick Douglass High School:** Valedictorian Kennedy Mackall earned three

full-ride offers, including the Baneker/Key Scholarship to the University of Maryland and the Presidential Scholarship to Coppin State University.

- **Bowie High School:** Class President Tristan Imanene will attend Delaware State University with over \$220,000 in scholarships to study for a professional degree while joining the Army ROTC.
- **International High School at Largo:** Nearly one-third of the senior class earned the Maryland Seal of Biliteracy, contributing to a collective 4,000 service learning hours.

All 2026 ceremonies will be livestreamed via the PGSCPS Class of 2026 portal, which also features graduation schedules, news, and student highlights.

Award from A1

ademic or athletic scholarships, these are given based on the students local community service efforts,” said Donald Frederick, Chair of the Scholarship Committee.

Of the 36 entries, four Prince George’s County High School seniors were each awarded \$2,500 college scholarships:

- **Isabelle Becraft, Eleanor Roosevelt High School**—attending Georgetown University
- **Horayn Gibson, Charles Herbert Flowers**—attending Vanderbilt University
- **Eden Oyelakin, Frederick Douglass**—attending University of MD College Park
- **Alyssa Tyson, Frederick Douglass**—attending Salisbury University

The winner of the Honorable Mention Scholarship of \$500: **Gerald Carter, Frederick Douglass**—attending University of MD College Park

Since its inception in 2008, the Scholarship Fund has provided over \$142,000 in scholarships to students graduating from Prince George’s County High Schools.

PGCAR is the voice for REALTORS® in Prince George’s County, Maryland. Representing more than 3,500 real estate professionals in the national capital area, PGCAR is an affiliate of the Maryland and National Association of REALTORS®. We are proud to serve our members and our community, and work to ensure professionalism in the industry. Our volunteers and staff work to offer services to real estate professionals and to provide avenues for our members to become more successful. We proudly work to promote and protect homeownership and private property rights.

Envirothon from A1

We give heartfelt thanks to everyone involved. Let’s go win the Maryland State Envirothon!”

The event was sponsored by several organizations in addition to PGSCD and Prince George’s County Public School System (PGCPS). The program requires significant funding for instruments, transportation, and lunch, to name a few. This year’s sponsors included:

- Keep Prince George’s County Beautiful
- Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO)
- Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission
- Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts
- Prince George’s County Farm Bureau, R&D Cross
- Environmental Quality Resources (EQR)
- Atwell LLC, Robin Hill Farm & Vineyard
- The Colevas Group
- The Rotary Club of Upper Marlboro
- The Forest Garden Club

“We are proud that our Envirothon students are gaining the knowledge, skills, and leadership experience needed to address complex environmental challenges,” said Kurt Lienau, Environmental Outreach Educator with the Department of Environmental Education at the William S. Schmidt Center. “Through the Envirothon, students not only learn to tackle pressing local and global issues but also inspire action in their communities and promote a lifelong commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainability. I am especially pleased that this year a different school scored the highest in each category.”

PGSCD and the Schmidt Center collaborated with partners from the Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission’s Parks and Recreation division, Maryland’s USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), Prince George’s County’s Department of the Environment, and University of Maryland Extension to provide training opportunities and resources to teams and their coaches.

Envirothon Coach, Nadisha Clayton-Garrison, says, “I’m incredibly proud of our Envirothon Team and this fifth consecutive win. This year is especially meaningful as we celebrate our seniors, many of whom have been part of the program since 9th grade and will be heading to college this fall. The \$1,500 scholarship will go a long way in supporting their educational expenses.

These students have shown remarkable perseverance, balancing the demands of academics, athletics, and multiple co-curricular commitments. Their dedication, discipline, and passion for environmental science truly set them apart, and this achievement reflects the hard work they’ve put in over the years.”

Their dedication, discipline, and passion for the Envirothon program truly set them apart, and this achievement reflects the hard work they’ve put in over the years.”

The winning team from Laurel High School will head to the State competition at Mount Saint Mary’s University, June 10–11. The Maryland State Envirothon champions will advance to the National Conservation Foundation (NCF) Envirothon competition held July 19–25 at Mississippi State University in Starkville, Mississippi.

With more counties and states participating each year, the Envirothon competition continues to expand its reach. PGSCD remains committed to its goal to educate as many students and teachers as possible on the importance of conserving our natural resources to preserve and protect the environment. As always, we are #PrinceGeorgesProud!

The mission of the Prince George’s Soil Conservation District is to protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the citizens of the State and County, and otherwise enhance their living environment by conservation of soil, water and related resources. The District works to control and prevent soil erosion in order to preserve natural resources, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, assist in maintaining the navigability of rivers and harbors, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base and public lands.

The Prince George’s Post
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Since 1932

Graduation from A1

munity College and Largo High School.

Ahead of the celebrations, Interim Superintendent Dr. Shawn Joseph reflected on the many paths to success represented by the Class of 2026.

“Graduation season reminds us of a powerful truth: excellence comes in many forms,” said Dr. Joseph. “Whether our graduates choose enrollment in a university, employment in a high-demand career, enlistment in service to our nation, or entrepreneurship to build something of their own, they represent the strength of the village that helped them rise.”

The Class of 2026 has demonstrated exceptional achievement:

HEALTH *and* WELLNESS

Expanded Federal Healthcare Tax Credits Expired— And Marylanders Feel the Pinch

By AMELIA TWYMAN
Capital News Service

Self-employed piano and voice teacher Alice Goldberg of Cheverly, Maryland, was paying only \$28 a month for health insurance last year thanks to a combination of state and federal subsidies that covered a significant portion of her costs.

But now Goldberg's federal subsidy has gone away, leaving her with a monthly bill of \$248—nearly nine times that of what it was before.

This increase has already prompted the music instructor, who has been giving private lessons for almost four years, to reluctantly raise the rates on some of her students. Her plans to buy her first home have also stalled.

"I have to take all of that expendable income that I have in my mind and put it toward this health care stuff," she said.

Goldberg is just one of millions of Affordable Care Act enrollees struggling after the federal government allowed its special enhanced tax credits to expire at the end of 2025.

Even in Maryland, where lawmakers implemented a replacement subsidy program to temporarily offset losses for many ACA recipients, many people are paying dramatically more for health insurance. According to the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, the average person under age 30 who got insurance on the exchange paid a monthly premium of \$559 in April—up 46% in a year.

As a result, people are beginning to rethink their health insurance plans and how they spend their money.



Alice Goldberg, a self-employed music teacher, poses for a portrait at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis on April 17, 2026.

Goldberg herself receives money from the state, but only \$170 a month. She lost over half of her aid when the federal subsidies expired.

"And I'm telling you, there are people who are so much worse off than I am," she said.

The subsidies expire

The federal subsidies that expired at the end of last year, formally called Advanced Premium Tax Credits, originated from the Covid-era as an extension of the 2010 Affordable Care Act.

First passed in 2021 and later extended through 2025 as part of the Inflation Reduction Act, these tax credits aimed to offer additional financial support to those already enrolled in the ACA marketplace. They covered a larger portion of people's health care premiums and expanded to include more middle-income families.

The health policy research non-profit Kaiser Family Foundation found that by 2025, 22

million Americans—over 90% of all ACA marketplace enrollees—were receiving some degree of Advanced Premium Tax Credits.

The federal subsidies had positive effects all across Maryland, said Vincent DeMarco, president of Maryland Healthcare for All.

Roughly 400,000 Marylanders acquired health insurance after the subsidies went into effect, which helped contribute to a \$460 million reduction in uncompensated hospital care that would have otherwise been added to insurance costs for everyone, DeMarco said.

Despite these widespread benefits, Congress did not vote to extend the Advanced Premium Tax Credits past their 2025 expiration date, leaving millions of Americans to grapple with pre-pandemic prices.

"One of the hardest things to see happen [was] how abruptly everything was going to change," said Mika Hamer, an assistant professor at the Univer-

sity of Maryland's School of Public Health. "Just because you know the cost of your health insurance is changing... it doesn't change the fact that people need continuous health care."

The impact in Maryland

In an effort to make that transition a little less abrupt, some states, including Maryland, have adopted differing measures to support those impacted by the loss of enhanced federal tax credits.

Maryland lawmakers approved a state subsidy program in September 2025 that fully replaces federal subsidies for people below 200% of the federal poverty level and partially for those between 250% and 400% of the federal poverty level.

Those above 400% will not receive any relief from the state and are likely to be most impacted by the expiration of the advanced tax credits, the Maryland Insurance Administration said in September.

Baltimore resident and ACA enrollee Bobby Laughlin said his health insurance plan has not changed much this year despite the loss of federal aid because state subsidies have so far made up the difference.

Last year, the 32-year-old restaurant worker and HVAC service technician was down to paying less than \$65 a month for his insurance. He would now be paying as much as \$450 if it weren't for the assistance he receives from the state.

Instead, his monthly bill has only increased about \$5 since the expiration of enhanced federal subsidies.

"That's really something I'm

thankful for, that in this state, the governor made sure that they were going to continue to fund these credits for health care," Laughlin said.

But Maryland's ability to finance the backup program has its limits. Currently, coverage only runs until the end of the year.

Laughlin is aware of this, which is why he is in the process of searching for a new job that offers health insurance.

"I'll either have to go back to a plan that doesn't really cover much, which I don't want to do, [or] I'm gonna have to change my career," he said.

Goldberg, who is already facing steeper health care costs after losing the federal portion of her tax credits, would be impacted even more if state subsidies ran out. Like Laughlin, she said her bill would increase to about \$450 a month.

"That is a lot of money," she said. "I would be incapable of maintaining a comfortable standard of living."

What's happening elsewhere

Not all states have a support system to help cushion the blow of higher insurance costs like Maryland does, said Francesca Weaks, an assistant research scientist who specializes in health equity and environmental justice at UMD's School of Public Health.

Impacts in southern states have been especially heavy, as some people are trying to decide if they want to keep their health insurance at all, she said.

Experts agree that if health insurance costs for ACA marketplace enrollees continue to rise as a result of expired federal subsidies, then the effects will ripple outward to hospitals, medical care providers and the rest of Americans.

First, as plans become less affordable for ACA participants, they may begin to forego insurance altogether, Hamer said. That could then make them hesitant to visit the doctor and seek early treatment for medical issues.

As a result, hospitals could see an influx of uninsured people in need of serious care, she explained.

Uncompensated care programs exist in Maryland and elsewhere that require hospitals to cover a portion of a person's medical bill if they cannot afford the cost themselves.

However, if hospitals put more money toward those programs, then they can't invest in other things like workforce development, new technology and building expansion, Hamer said.

According to DeMarco, the price of more uncompensated care also flows directly into and increases health insurance premiums for everyone.

That is why, he said, "the public needs to know that expanding health care coverage is good for everybody."

Congress does nothing

It seems unlikely that Congress will revisit the issue of enhanced ACA subsidies anytime soon.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation extending tax credits back in January, but no further moves have been made to address the bill in the Senate, where similar efforts have already been shut down in the past.

Underscoring this lack of attention is the omission of a detailed Affordable Care Act alternative in President Donald Trump's "Great Healthcare

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A Challenge for Young Marylanders: Getting—and Keeping—Health Insurance

By DAVI JACOBS
Capital News Service

When Autumn Greene was 21, her mother died. Without warning, the young woman also lost her health insurance.

Greene, now 22 and a student at the University of Maryland Global Campus, had been covered under her mother's state plan. No one told her that when her mother died, the coverage would end. Her father, who lives out of state and is disabled, could not add her to his insurance.

"I remember feeling complete dread," Greene said. "As if losing my mother wasn't enough, I now had to navigate life's complex systems without much guidance."

Greene's experience illustrates a broader challenge. For many young adults, the transition to independent health insurance involves navigating extensive processes with limited support.

"There's a lot of financial education that young people need to stay on top of," said Shlomo Rosenstein, a health insurance broker based in Columbia, Maryland. "So many little details that could really play a big part of their lives down the road."

A sudden loss

At the time of her mother's death, Greene was in weekly therapy and under psychiatric care for bipolar II disorder and other mental health conditions. After losing coverage, she could no longer afford treatment. Her therapy office temporarily continued care during a short grace period, but it didn't last long.

She said she enrolled in insurance through a job, but quit

months later after experiencing workplace bullying, thereby losing coverage again. She earned too much to qualify for Medicaid, leaving her uninsured.

Without access to care or medication, Greene's mental health deteriorated. She attempted suicide and was hospitalized, later receiving a \$14,000 bill after being incorrectly told her treatment would be covered.

"It felt like I was being punished for losing my mother," she said.

How the system works

Under the Affordable Care Act, young adults can remain on a parent's health plan until age 26, with a 120-day window—60 days before and after their birthday—to serve as a safeguard intended to ease the transition.

But the age 26 cutoff is just one of many moments when young adults find themselves thrust into the health insurance system with little preparation. For some, the disruption comes earlier: finishing school, losing a parent, or leaving the foster care system.

For others, it's leaving a job or navigating the gap between temporary and permanent employment. These transitions often overlap with other major life changes—moving, completing a degree, starting a career—making an already complex process feel overwhelming.

The stakes rose in 2026, when pandemic-era tax credits expired and premiums climbed nationwide.

So, with the help of the Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative, Maryland responded by making its Young Adult Subsidy perma-

nent, offering additional state support for residents under 37.

Interviews with young Marylanders suggest that even with these protections, the system still fails them.

Betting on healthy

Insurance works by spreading risk. Most people pay premiums and use little care. A few get very sick or injured, costing far more than they pay. The healthy people's premiums cover the sick people's bills.

But not all healthy people get health insurance.

"It can be really easy to think 'I'm young, I'm healthy, I don't need it,'" said Dr. Kyle Fischer, a clinical associate professor of emergency medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. "But at the same time, we forget that diseases like testicular cancer is a disease of young men. You might be perfectly healthy at 25 and then get cancer at 27. It's just not worth it to take that risk."

Faith Dew was working a contract job without benefits when she turned 26 and had to find her own insurance. After seeing plans that charged \$500 a month, Dew settled on a limited-coverage plan offered by the Washington, D.C., government.

"I was like, I'm not trying to pay that," she said. Six months later, Dew felt her face being pulled in one direction. After going to the urgent care, she was referred to another doctor—but her insurance didn't work in the doctor's D.C. office so she traveled to Silver Spring instead and was told that she had a facial tremor and needed to see a specialist.

Months later, Dew was able to see a neurologist who confirmed that she had multiple sclerosis.

"I was overwhelmed," she said. "I had seen people like (actress) Selma Blair with a cane and I warped that aspect of it."

When Dew asked about starting treatment, her doctor warned her that nine times out of 10, people with her insurance are denied Kesimpta, the medication she needed for treatment.

So she had to wait until the following year to take Kesimpta after her new job's benefits kicked in.

"The thing I would have done differently is gotten a job with benefits," Dew said.

Lost in translation

The price tag of insurance plans is not the only barrier to being in control of the system.

For many, understanding insurance terms and rules presents a separate challenge.

Brokers who work with young adults say the biggest barrier is not cost—it's confusion.

Wenxi Yu, a first-year UMD PhD student from China, thought she had an advantage. Before coming to the U.S., she worked in a hospital and her mother works in China's insurance system. If anyone should understand coverage, it would be her.

But the American health care system shocked her. "Every time I want to see a doctor, I need to first check if they are in my network," Yu said. "That was so weird to me."

When she tried to find a dermatologist near her College Park apartment, the CareFirst portal returned zero results. Then came an unexpected \$40 bill from a



Autumn Greene holds a photo of her mother, Amanda Upchurch Clauer, in Manner Point Park in Joppatowne, Maryland, on April 22, 2026.

nutritionist she'd confirmed was in-network—a charge stemming from a mismatch between her online insurance card and her physical card.

Yu eventually sorted out her billing issue, but the experience left her wary.

"The first thing in my mind was that there must have been something wrong with my health insurance," she said. "I can't wait for something more urgent or serious to happen."

Lydia Neidlinger, a 23-year-old former UMD graduate student, turned to ChatGPT for help in understanding insurance terms when her parents could no longer keep her on their small business plan.

"I literally asked, 'What does HSA mean? What does deductible mean?'" she said. "The fact sheets are not that easy to understand."

Neidlinger selected the plan with the lowest monthly premiums offered by her employer.

"If I got in a car wreck, it probably wouldn't be very good," she said. "But I took the cheapest plan."

Turning 26

For many young adults, the 26th birthday marks a hard deadline—a sudden loss of coverage that can feel arbitrary and unforgiving.

Asli McCullers, a behavioral and community health doctoral student with the School of Public Health at UMD, studies how young people transition into adult systems. But, she has seen the consequences up close. Her older brother turned 26 and didn't enroll in time.

"My parents were shocked when his name got crossed out immediately," she said. "He was uninsured for a full year."

His mistake became a family lesson. McCullers urges others to start early.

"Have a plan when you're 24—25 is too late," she said. "Start investigating and getting your options together."

McCullers decided to do things differently. She worked as an as-needed employee at Med-Star Health, which didn't qualify her to receive benefits. She asked

See CHALLENGE Page A6

COMMUNITY

Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall Once Advocated for the Cheltenham Boys

By ALINE BEHAR KADO
Capital News Service

When some boys wound up in the House of Reformation for Colored Boys, a juvenile correctional institution for Black boys in Cheltenham, Maryland, they turned to the NAACP for legal help. They found an attorney named Thurgood Marshall.

Before joining the U.S. Supreme Court, Marshall advocated for a group of boys at Cheltenham. These four boys in 1936 faced legal issues while serving their sentences at the institution, notorious for brutal and unsanitary conditions.

"The whole situation merely renews in my mind our fight toward cleaning up Cheltenham," Marshall wrote in a 1936 letter. "This investigation also convinces me that it pays to look into these matters toward the end that the people in authority in the Counties will realize that at least one group is constantly watching for the protection of the Negro's rights."

"This, I believe, tends to keep them in line."

Marshall was a central figure in the Civil Rights Movement who led the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and won the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, which desegregated schools. A Baltimore native, Marshall was the first Black Supreme Court justice, serving from 1967 to 1991.

Marshall's advocacy for the Cheltenham boys resonates today as Maryland lawmakers have passed legislation to investigate the brutal conditions and deaths of Black boys at Cheltenham.

A search of Marshall's correspondence in the NAACP online archives showed 14 documents involving Marshall's advocacy for boys at Cheltenham. In a Jan. 25, 1936, memo, Marshall reported on his investigation of four Cheltenham boys who were arrested in connection with an alleged attack on Eva Smith, a white matron at Cheltenham.

Marshall's report to Lillie Jackson, then Baltimore NAACP branch president and a major civil rights figure, showed there was no evidence the

Before his service on the U.S. Supreme Court, Thurgood Marshall was an attorney for the NAACP, where he advocated for a group of boys incarcerated at Cheltenham.

THOMAS J. O'HALLORAN / LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



four boys were on the same floor as Smith at the time of the attack. Marshall suggested Smith may have been upset with the administration, and noted some general staff dissension at Cheltenham.

Four days after Marshall submitted his memo, the boys were released from jail in Upper Marlboro and returned to Cheltenham.

In March 1936, Marshall asked Cheltenham Superintendent Hal T. Kearns about whether two boys, Ernest Patton and Hugh Davis, would qualify for parole. Kearns asked for Marshall's help in finding Davis' mother so the boy could be paroled. Marshall tried to locate the mothers of Davis and Patton, and

Hugh Davis was paroled in June 1936.

Almost a decade later, Carl Murphy, publisher of the *Afro-American*, a newspaper published in Baltimore, Maryland, alerted Marshall about boys being sent to Cheltenham without adequate due process.

"Recently a boy was sent to Cheltenham by Judge Smith because he was in a crowd which had jimmied a door of a store," Murphy wrote in 1945. "Nothing was taken and there was no evidence that the boy did the jimmying but he got a five year term in Cheltenham."

He asked for Marshall's help in establishing a public defender's office in Baltimore to handle such cases.

Reporters Haley Parsley and Zaka Hossain contributed to this article.

Tuberculosis Plagued a Maryland Black Reformatory School. Experts Say Deaths Were Preventable.

By ALINE BEHAR KADO, MIRA BEINART and MARA K. BELL
Capital News Service

Young Black boys slept back to back in cramped rooms at the House of Reformation for Colored Boys, a juvenile correctional institution in Cheltenham, Maryland. The boys were allowed to bathe once a week, often sharing towels. As punishment, they were held in isolation cells, crawling with bugs, for days. Many Cheltenham inmates contracted tuberculosis, despite warnings to the facility's management about unsanitary conditions.

At least 86 boys died of tuberculosis at Cheltenham from 1887 to 1936, according to a Capital News Service analysis of death certificate records.

The health conditions of Cheltenham are expected to be among the areas explored by a special investigative commission, approved by Maryland lawmakers earlier this month. The commission is due to submit a report to the governor and Maryland General Assembly by 2029. Capital News Service journalists began examining the health issues in January through archival research and data analysis of historic documents.

Thousands of young boys were incarcerated at the House of Reformation, now known as Cheltenham Youth Detention Center. For many years, the facility lacked a full-time physician and competent medical staff. "We were shocked to find the hospital without a single attendant, in our opinion, with the training or knowledge necessary to take care of the sick. There were four or five patients in bed at the hospital, some apparently were very ill," a March 5, 1935, grand jury report said.

"Although a Doctor visits them every day or two, the sight of them lying there, possibly waiting for death, made a most disagreeable impression upon each of your committee members," the grand jury report said. The facility's purported nurse never graduated from high school and was

a former plumber and factory worker, according to a 1934 report by the Child Welfare League of America.

The Child Welfare League, grand jury investigators and other independent monitors blamed Cheltenham management for doing little to curb the deaths by tuberculosis.

"It is probable that some boys have acquired this disease at Cheltenham," according to the 1934 Child Welfare League report. "Until the management has provided enough medical service and adequate diet, over a period of several years, and can prove that those with this disease contracted it before admission, this presumption will be justified."

A Baltimore grand jury regularly inspected Cheltenham and, as early as 1926, called for transferring boys with tuberculosis to hospitals. There were obstacles. Henryton State Hospital, the only colored sanatorium in the state, refused to accept inmates, according to a 1929 letter.

"It would be a grave mistake to accept this type of case," the hospital's superintendent wrote in a letter. "I am strongly opposed to accepting cases, at Henryton, from correctional institutions."

The reports from the Baltimore grand jury in the mid-1930s criticized Cheltenham management for the "disregard for mentality and health of boys when crowded in the dormitories."

The grand jury from 1935 reported there were 402 boys at Cheltenham at the time, "many of whom had venereal diseases and tuberculosis."

By the late 19th century, tuberculosis was the leading cause of death across the United States, killing one in seven Americans. The disease was referred to as consumption because it appeared to "consume" the body. Black communities across the United States were disproportionately affected by the epidemic. In 1916, Black people in Maryland were dying of the disease twice as

See TUBERCULOSIS Page A6

Death Count at Cheltenham Boys' Center Was Nine Times That of White Facility

By TIASIA SAUNDERS and ELA JALIL
Capital News Service

The death count at the House of Reformation for Colored Boys at Cheltenham, a juvenile detention center whose violent past is under state investigation, was nine times the amount of its white counterpart, the House of Refuge for Juvenile Delinquents or Charles H. Hickey, Jr. School, according to a Capital News Service analysis.

CNS examined historical documents and known death certificates to show 243 deaths at Cheltenham compared to 26 at Hickey between 1860 and 1942. The CNS calculations surpass prior published estimates. No news organization has compared the Cheltenham deaths to the white-only Hickey school.

Legislation passed by the Maryland General Assembly in late March would create a new special commission to investigate the deaths. On Wednesday, Gov. Wes Moore unveiled a roadside marker at Cheltenham in southern Prince George's County that "calls us to remember and defend those harmed by institutional racial violence."

The governor also went to a wooded area near the reform facility, where many of the boys were buried in unmarked graves, and led a group of state officials in prayer. A group of Maryland Department of Juvenile Services officials began investigating the abandoned burial site for Black boys at Cheltenham in October 2024.

"Loving our state does not mean lying about its history. It means telling the truth—even when the truth is hard," said Moore in a press release. "What happened on these grounds was state-sanctioned harm, and acknowledging that is only the first step. My administration, in partnership with the Legislative Black Caucus, is dedicated to the work ahead—to find these children, learn their stories, and ensure they have eternal peace."

Examining Cheltenham's conditions matters today, as the legacy of juvenile incarceration continues. The Cheltenham Youth Detention Center, formerly the House of Reformation and Instruction for Colored Children, and the Charles H. Hickey, Jr. School, formerly the House of Refuge for Juvenile Delinquents, were 19th-century juvenile detention facilities established to keep children and young adults outside of adult prisons. Cheltenham was opened in 1873 in rural Prince George's County as the first reform school for Black boys in the American South. The facility emphasized vocational training and a healthy environment, but in practice, it relied on manual labor and functioned as a form of forced labor or convict leasing.

Hickey, on the other hand, opened in 1855 for white boys in Baltimore and later moved to Loch Raven in Baltimore County. Hickey focused more on formal education and rehabilitative instruction. Abuse was reported in each institution, and the state ultimately took over Hickey in 1918 and Cheltenham in 1937. The facilities were desegregated in 1961.

CNS previously reported on the causes of death, based on an analysis of 177 death certificates for inmates at Cheltenham, Hickey and juveniles at the Maryland Correctional Institution at Jessup. CNS determined the 243 deaths at Cheltenham through an analysis of the facilities' annual reports dating to 1873, as well as available death certificates. The historical record has gaps, particularly in

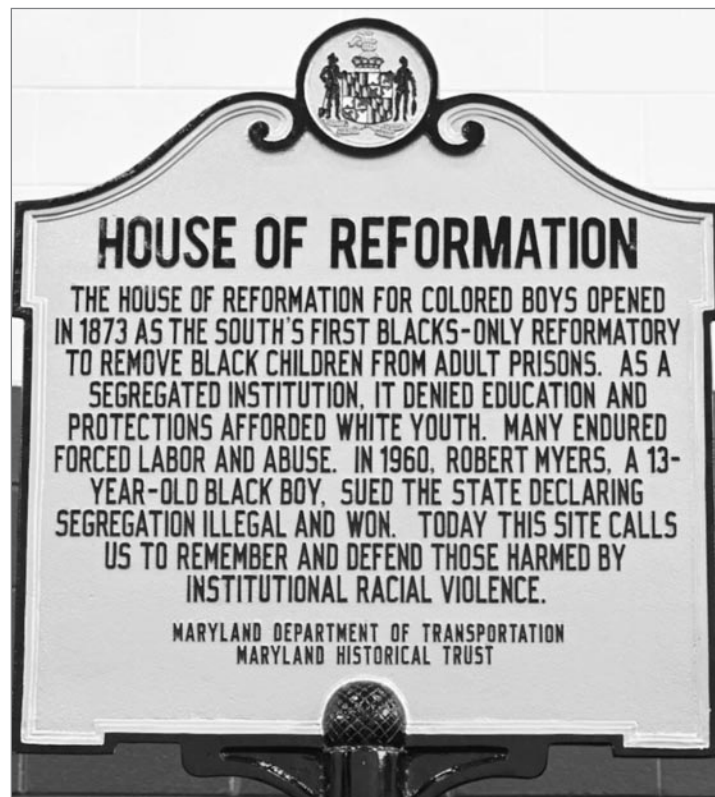


PHOTO OFFICE OF GOV. MOORE

Gov. Wes Moore on Wednesday, May 6 unveiled a new roadside marker acknowledging the abuse of inmates at the House of Reformation for Colored Boys, now the Cheltenham Youth Detention Facility.

the 1920s, and there's ongoing research at the Maryland State Archives to uncover additional deaths. The count of 243 is expected to rise as research into Cheltenham continues.

At the Cheltenham facility, living conditions were overcrowded and unsanitary, where boys with tuberculosis lacked proper medical care, according to grand jury and Cheltenham annual reports reviewed by CNS. Grand jury reports cited inhumane and inadequate medical care at Cheltenham. Conversely, the Hickey facility had better sanitary conditions and more medical oversight, resulting in lower mortality rates. The white youth at Hickey also faced corporal punishment and solitary confinement, even as the facility received higher funding.

The Maryland Legislature has approved a measure to establish the Commission on the House of Reformation and Instruction for Colored Youth to investigate the history, operations and deaths of children at the former institution. In addition, the legislation will fund a survey and restoration of a neglected burial site in the woods near Cheltenham. Moore is expected to sign this legislation soon.

"I think this bill can right the wrongs—that is to say, we recognize the mistake, that we had some racist policies, and we need to turn them around. We need to put some dignity or respect on these gravestones," said Del. Karen Toles, D-Prince George's County, who co-sponsored the Cheltenham legislation.

At both the Cheltenham and Hickey facilities, the boys were

subjected to harsh discipline and labor. The abuse and forced labor at the Cheltenham facility was far more severe, exploitative and deadly. The Black facility had a system of paroling boys to service, which bound them to work for private white families as domestic or farm laborers until they turned 21. In some cases, these boys worked past their release date.

This system closely mirrored the conditions of peonage and slavery, according to Jason Mayernick, a Metro State University, Minnesota professor who studied the two facilities. In that respect, it resembled Maryland's history as a slave state, extending coerced labor practices into the juvenile justice system.

Black youth in Maryland remain disproportionately represented in juvenile detention and continue to face unequal outcomes. According to a 2023 fact sheet by The Sentencing Project, which studies mass incarceration, Black youth in Maryland are about 8.7 times more likely to be placed in juvenile facilities. Joshua Rovner, a senior research analyst with The Sentencing Project, said the juvenile justice system has dehumanized children of all races for centuries.

"We really have a basic problem with how we treat children who are incarcerated," Rovner said.

Rovner said any number of deaths at a state facility should be alarming.

"If we see children dying, we need to panic about that," Rovner said. "We need to be outraged whether that number is 100 or 10 or 1."

The Prince George's Post

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BUSINESS AND FINANCE

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

About Social Security's "First Year Rule" and Withdrawing From SS

By RUSSELL GLOOR,

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

Dear Rusty: I am 63 years old, and about to apply for my Social Security benefits. I am self-employed but only working part time. I know about Social Security's annual earnings limit but recently I learned I must also be concerned about a monthly earnings limit of \$2,040. My questions are:

- 1) How do I find out if I will be subject to a monthly earning limit of \$2,040 per month? I thought it was only evaluated annually.
- 2) If I choose to cancel Social Security within the first year or after, what are the penalties? Would I have to pay them back for the whole amount for the whole time that they paid me? Which makes no sense, since I have been paid into SS since I was 13 years old.

Can you help me understand this? **Signed: Claiming Early and Still Working**

Dear Claiming Early: It can get tricky if you are still working after claiming your Social Security before your SS full retirement age (FRA), especially during your first year collecting. I'm happy to answer your specific questions:

1. There is a special rule which applies during your first year collecting early Social Security benefits (e.g., before your full retirement age or "FRA," which for you is age 67). What will happen is this: when the IRS provides SSA with your 2026 earnings (in 2027), SSA will review to see if your total 2026 net earnings from self-employment exceeded the 2026 annual limit of \$24,480. If not, no further action is necessary. But if you did exceed the full year 2026 earnings limit, SSA will contact you and ask you to provide them with details about your monthly 2026 net earnings. If you have exceeded the monthly limit in any 2026 month after your SS benefit started, you will not be entitled to SS benefits for that month. Essentially, if you have exceeded the annual limit, you cannot exceed the monthly earnings limit in any remaining month during your first year of collecting. If you exceeded the annual limit, and also any monthly limit, SSA will send you an overpayment notice saying you must repay them for the benefits you were not entitled to receive because you exceeded the monthly earnings limit.
2. You can, within 12 months of applying for Social Security, ask SSA to withdraw your application for SS retirement benefits. They will do that for you, but you will also be required to repay them all SS benefits that they have already paid to (or for) you. This essentially would "wipe the slate clean" and enable your SS benefit to continue growing, allowing you to apply for a larger monthly benefit later. But if you wait longer than 12 months after you first apply for SS benefits, you can no longer withdraw your application for Social Security. Thereafter, you would be subject to the annual earnings limit (the monthly earnings limit would no longer apply).

FYI, after you reach your FRA, there is no limit on your earnings, and you could choose to suspend your benefit payments and earn Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs) to get a higher monthly benefit. Also at your FRA, if SSA withheld any of your benefits because you exceeded the earnings limit before reaching your FRA, you would get time credit for the number of months your benefits were withheld. Essentially, they would advance your benefit-start month by the number of months your benefits were withheld, yielding a slightly higher monthly amount after your FRA.

Finally, it's important to know that the contributions you made to Social Security from payroll taxes (FICA/SECA) over your lifetime are not what determines your monthly SS benefit amount. Your monthly SS benefit is based on two main factors: a) your average monthly earnings (indexed for inflation) for the highest earning 35 years over your lifetime as reported to the IRS, and b) the age at which you claim your SS benefits. Your contributions to Social Security while working only provide you with eligibility to collect SS benefits; the contributions aren't put into a separate account for you and are not used to calculate your monthly SS benefit.

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

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

Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation Celebrates Sprouts Farmers Market Lease Signing as Grocery Anchor at Westphalia Town Center

By PRESS OFFICER
PGCEDC

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (May 8, 2026)—The Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation (PGCEDC) today celebrates a major milestone for the County as Walton Global, a leading global real estate asset management and land investment company, announces that Sprouts Farmers Market—one of the largest and fastest growing specialty retailers of fresh, natural and organic food in the United States—has signed a lease to serve as the grocery anchor at the highly anticipated Westphalia Town Center retail development in Prince George's County, Maryland.

PGCEDC played a pivotal role in making this partnership a reality by facilitating the initial meeting between Walton Global and Sprouts Farmers Market at ICSC Las Vegas, the nation's premier retail real estate conference. That introduction helped set the foundation for the lease agreement now signed.

Sprouts Farmers Market will occupy approximately 23,000 square feet within the project's planned 140,000-square-foot retail center. The store is currently anticipated to open in the second half of 2028, subject to customary development approvals from Prince George's County.

"This announcement is a direct result of the intentional, relationship-driven economic development work that PGCEDC does every day on behalf of Prince George's County residents and businesses," said Ingrid S. Watson, President & CEO of the Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation. "Our partnership with County Executive Aisha Braveboy, Council Member Wala Blegay, Council Member Danielle Hunter, and the Westphalia community has been instrumental in making this initiative a reality. Sprouts is exactly the kind of quality, health-focused grocery destination that our residents deserve!"

"At ICSC Las Vegas, we made it our mission to connect the right people to unlock the right opportunities for Prince George's County," said Larry Hentz, Executive Director of Business Development at the

Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation. "Introducing the Walton Global team to Sprouts was a strategic move rooted in our deep understanding of what this community needs and what this development could become. Seeing that conversation evolve into a signed lease is incredibly gratifying, and it demonstrates the real, tangible impact of PGCEDC's presence at national retail and real estate forums."

"I am extremely excited that Sprouts will be an anchor tenant in Westphalia," said Aisha Braveboy, Prince George's County Executive. "My administration has been working closely with At-Large Councilmember Wala Blegay, District 6 Council Member Danielle Hunter, and the community to ensure that an elevated grocery experience that provides organic and locally-grown produce is a part of this community. We look forward to welcoming Sprouts to our County! As such, I have instructed my administration to make this a priority project."

Westphalia Town Center is a 480-acre master-planned, mixed-use community located in Upper Marlboro, Maryland along Maryland Route 4 (Pennsylvania Avenue). The project will include residential neighborhoods, retail, dining, and community services in a cohesive environment.

"Bringing a fresh, high-quality grocery store to our neighborhood is about more than just convenience; it's about ensuring every family has access to the healthy food they deserve," said Prince George's County Councilmember Wala Blegay. "I am proud to announce this new location, and I pledge to work with staff and my colleagues on the Council to actively support the fast tracking of the remaining approvals and infrastructure needs to ensure we get these doors open and our residents served as quickly as possible."

Westphalia Town Center is envisioned as a premier live-work-play destination, blending modern residential living with walkable retail and community-focused amenities. The broader master plan reflects Walton Global's long-term commitment to delivering thoughtfully planned communities in high-growth corridors.

"Securing Sprouts as our anchor tenant marks a major milestone for Westphalia Town Center," said Michael Slavotinek, EVP of Real Estate – East Region at Walton Global. "This partnership advances our vision of delivering a dynamic, community-focused destination that supports long-term growth and connectivity for residents and the surrounding area."

Heritage Partners is leading leasing efforts for the retail component of the project. For retail leasing inquiries, please contact Brian Greene, EVP Leasing, at bg@hp-llc.com or 703-725-1351. Additional information is available at www.hp-llc.com.

The Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation (PGCEDC) is the lead economic development agency for Prince George's County, Maryland. PGCEDC works to attract, retain, and grow businesses in the County by leveraging its strategic location in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, its diverse and talented workforce, and its proximity to major federal agencies, research institutions, and transportation infrastructure. PGCEDC provides a full suite of business services, including site selection assistance, financial incentives, and connections to county and state resources. Visit www.pgcdec.com.

Walton Global is an investment real estate and asset management company focused on pre-development land in the path of growth. Founded in 1979, Walton currently manages US \$4.44 billion of real estate assets on behalf of investors from more than 91 countries. Walton currently manages or owns approximately 85,000 acres of land across North America, with roughly 90% located in the United States. For more information, visit www.walton.com.

Sprouts Farmers Market is one of the largest and fastest growing specialty retailers of fresh, natural and organic food in the United States. Sprouts helps people live and eat better with fresh produce at the heart of the store and delicious discoveries for every dietary lifestyle. Headquartered in Phoenix, AZ, Sprouts employs approximately 36,000 team members and operates more than 480 stores in 25 states nationwide. To learn more about Sprouts, visit www.sprouts.com/about.

Emerge Maryland Celebrates Graduation of the 2026 Signature Program Class and 2025 Bootcamp Class

Maryland women leaders complete nationally recognized political training program as Emerge Maryland continues expanding the pipeline of women candidates across the state

By PRESS OFFICER
Emerge Maryland

LANHAM, Md. (May 11, 2026)—Emerge Maryland proudly celebrated the graduation of its 2026 Signature Program Class and 2025 Bootcamp Class this weekend, honoring a dynamic and diverse group of women leaders prepared to run for office, lead campaigns, advocate for their communities, and serve across Maryland.

The graduation ceremony featured keynote remarks from Delegate Jamila Woods, an alumna of the Emerge Maryland Class of 2018, who encouraged graduates to continue leading with courage, authenticity, and purpose.

The organization also celebrated Delegate Alethia McCaskill, formerly affiliated with the Class of 2018, as an official graduating member of the Class of 2026.

The Emerge Maryland Signature Program is a premier training program that prepares Democratic women to run for office and lead successful campaigns. The Bootcamp Program provides intensive training for women actively exploring candidacy or preparing for public leadership.

2026 Signature Program Graduates

- **Dr. Juliet Agocha, Prince George's County**
- Adrienne Mathis, St. Mary's County
- Alicia Contreras-Donello, Montgomery County
- Alleria Stanley, Frederick County
- Bassant Kadry, Frederick County
- Bianca Scherr, Montgomery County
- Brenda Quintero, St. Mary's County
- Delegate Alethia McCaskill, Baltimore County



PHOTO COURTESY EMERGE MARYLAND

Emerge Maryland proudly celebrated the graduation of its 2026 Signature Program Class.

- **Diedra Henry-Spires, Prince George's County**
- **Kaala Evans, Prince George's County**
- Kandi Morris, Montgomery County
- Kate Stein, Montgomery County
- **Lindsey Doyle, Prince George's County**
- Lindsey MacGregor, Baltimore City
- Maureen Wambui, Baltimore County
- **Mea Stewart, Prince George's County**
- Riley Donahue, Anne Arundel County
- **Sonia Huntley, Prince George's County**
- Tracy Starr, Anne Arundel County

2025 Bootcamp Graduates

- Arikia Wade, Baltimore County
- Delegate Kim Ross, Baltimore County
- Heidi Schmidt, Anne Arundel County
- Jessica Hammond, Harford County
- Jyoti Mohan, Baltimore County
- **Qiana Johnson, Prince George's County**

- **Shannice Anderson, Baltimore City**
 - **Shelly Beard-Francois, Frederick County**
- Since its founding, Emerge Maryland has trained more than 200 women leaders across the state. In 2026 alone, 92 Emerge Maryland alumnae are on the ballot, demonstrating the organization's continued impact on building a strong pipeline of Democratic women leaders in Maryland.

Emerge Maryland remains committed to removing barriers to political leadership, expanding access to campaign training, and supporting women from diverse backgrounds as they pursue public office and civic leadership opportunities.

For more information about Emerge Maryland, upcoming programs, or ways to support future cohorts, visit www.emergeamerica.org/.

