

# Joanne C. BENSON

Maryland State Senate, District 24

*"If we don't educate our children, we won't have to worry about our future, because there won't be one!"*



## 2022 END OF SESSION LETTER

Dear Wonderful Supporters and Friends:

On Monday, April 11th, 2022 at midnight, our 443rd Legislative Session ended. Many wonderful legislative initiatives became law which proved to be beneficial for us. We were very relieved that the Covid-19 pandemic did not cause as much stress as it did in our last session. The business of our general assembly proceeded in-person and our committees were able to meet with the public hearings which were streamed as well as in person. We were especially happy to see lobbyists and interest groups who came to visit our office and gave compelling testimony in our committees. While I was disappointed with pieces of legislation which were important to our county but did not pass, I am looking forward to reintroducing them next session. This was a fast pace session which kept us very focused and busy. We are still washing our hands, wearing masks at our digression, and practicing safe distancing.

## INVESTING IN EDUCATION



Suitland High School was built in 1951 and the building has been a pinnacle of education in the Suitland neighborhood. The auditorium was constructed later in 1981 and the vocational wing was added to the school the following year in 1982. The last renovations to Suitland High School were done in 1984 but now Suitland High School will be fully renovated once again. Suitland High School has been awarded 27 million dollars by the State of Maryland for the purpose of rebuilding the school. The total cost of rebuilding Suitland High School is 180 million dollars which has now been secured. This long overdue improvements will enhance the educational experience for generations to come in the community. We know that education is an essential tool to the way a child's development occurs, therefore we must invest in the development of our local, state, and federal leaders of tomorrow. With this investment we are taking the best step possible in securing a better future.

## MAP REDISTRICTING

In 2020 during the midst of the novel Coronavirus pandemic, the census occurred. The census tells us who we are and where we are going as a nation and helps our communities determine where to build everything from schools to supermarkets and from homes to hospitals. It mandates how government will distribute funds and assistance to states and localities. Redistricting criteria commonly reflects a combination of state and federal statutes, judicial interpretations, and historical practices. These may be viewed as efforts to provide fair representation for residents and prevent arbitrary or discriminatory boundaries. The State of Maryland has been redistricted to observe appropriate representation policies set out by the 2020 census. Please refer to the Maryland General Assembly website to stay informed about who are your representatives and how to contact them.



## GHOST GUNS



### Public Safety - Untraceable Firearms (SB 387)

The Maryland General Assembly has passed legislation that will ban ghost guns. A ghost gun is a firearm assembled without a serial number from home-based means. Because of the easy access to ghost guns, these weapons have become a primary tool for criminal behavior, especially among our youth. The bill will prohibit individuals from selling, buying, possessing, or transferring ghost guns in Maryland. This ban will be utilized to stop violent crimes, especially among juveniles who seek these weapons out because of their discreetness and previously limited regulation.

## VULNERABLE ADULTS REGISTRY



SB 357 establishes a Workgroup to Study Best Practices for a Vulnerable Adult Registry in Maryland. This bill outlines the Workgroup's purpose to identify the appropriate State agency to operate a vulnerable adult registry and determine how a \$1,400,000 grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services will be allocated and used if awarded. The Workgroup will study and make recommendations regarding any changes or improvements to State law and requires a report of the Workgroup's recommendations to the Governor and Maryland General Assembly by June 1, 2023.

## PUBLIC HEALTH - EMERGENCY AND ALLERGY TREATMENT PROGRAM - NURSE PRACTITIONERS



Maryland legislators have passed a bill that will approve nurse practitioners to prescribe and dispense auto-injectable epinephrine, generally referred to as an epi-pen, to specific certificate holders who work in youth camps. This bill will have blatant outcomes. It will permit people who are 18 years old or older and are youth camp advisors, to have the capacity to save children's lives by endorsing an EpiPen, assuming they have an allergic response. The counselors are required to complete an instructive educational program to become an approved nurse practitioner expert and securely dispense epi-pen injections to kids as needed. Children are the future of this world, and those responsible for them must take every precaution to preserve their lives.

## BOND INITIATIVES

I am pleased to report your elected officials worked hard this session as they made sure Prince George's County was well accounted for with new funds. The amount of \$1,450,000 was brought back to District 24 to help with multiple projects. With a total of \$11,593,000 being brought into the county, there will be a significant number of projects being started to help the county in various ways.

❖ **The Lake Arbor Foundation** is a community-owned and volunteer-operated organization that provides educational, recreational, and youth development programs for children by the senior population in Lake Arbor and surrounding communities. Lake Arbor Capital improvement received \$300,000 in total funding. The funding received will assist with the obtaining, planning, development, construction, redesign, reconstruction, site improvement, and capital equipment of the pool and athletic facilities.

❖ **The Mission of Love Charities** received \$100,000 in total funding for a new facility. Since its creation in 1989, the Mission of Love organization is a volunteer-led organization that empowers communities at a grassroots level so that they can help themselves in the fight against poverty and homelessness locally and globally. This organization is a humanitarian relief organization that has shown itself to be viable and dynamic in the fight against poverty. This funding will allow them to build a new facility, which will help greatly in their fight against poverty and homelessness in Prince George's County and across the world.

❖ **The Training Source** received 250,000 in funding for headquarters renovation. The Training Source's central goal is to provide education, training, and services that promote positive economic mobility. Additionally, they provide:

- Holistic youth and adult workforce development training (healthcare, hospitality and office, and professional services), youth leadership, college, and career planning programs.
- Employer services
- Financial literacy training
- There are public benefits application assistance, professional clothing for job seeking, COVID testing, and information and referral services.

The funding will improve the headquarters that they use to provide these services to the community. The improvements will enhance their abilities to help serve the community safely and more effectively.

❖ **The United Communities Against Poverty (UCAP)** will receive 500,000 for an Impact Center. UCAP is one of the largest nonprofit organizations in Princes George's County that provides opportunities and resources to individuals facing social and or economic hardships. UCAP gives both academic and trade skill training, homelessness support and independence services, affordable housing, financial literacy education, and access to adequate medical services. The funding will allow for an Impact Center to be created and give people in the community who need these services improved access to them and for volunteers to have a better and more efficient ability to distribute these services.

❖ **W. Sidney Pittman IMPACT Center - Historic Fairmount Heights Elementary School project** received a resounding 300,000 dollars to restore their facility. The restored facility will be used as a headquarters for a community Impact Center.

## SILVER LIGHTS REDETERMINATION

SB719 - Redetermination Process is a great advancement for the safety and ability of seniors to age safely in their homes. This bill was passed this session and means that if a client is in the energy assistance program by the time they are 64 years old, they would be eligible for the Redetermination Process. Once they are 65 years old they can indicate that their household situation is the same as the year before, they would not have to do a new application for energy assistance each year. This will greatly help seniors to continue to get the grants they need to keep their lights and heat on.



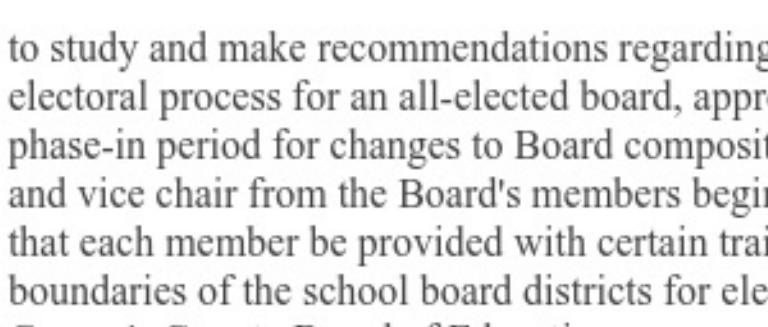
**SILVER LIGHTS**  
Senior Services

## STATE RETIREMENT AND PENSION SYSTEM - USE OF MINORITY AND WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESS ENTERPRISES (Diversity Among Asset Managers Act of 2022)



The Diversity Among Asset Managers Act will ensure that Maryland studies any disparity and inequities in the management of our state's pension fund. With this legislation, we will look to better understand systemic barriers that exist for women and minority asset managers, and we will take a comprehensive look at who is managing our pension dollars. The main goal of a pension fund is to ensure there will be enough money to cover the pensions of employees after their retirement in the future. Your pension helps you to maintain your standard of living in retirement, and savings provides important supplemental income for unforeseen expenses. Group pension plans provide guaranteed, monthly income for life, which makes financial security in retirement much more achievable for those who have them. If we have more transparency with who is managing our pension fund, we can expand business opportunities to those that have been historically locked out of the industry (SB 954/HB 542).

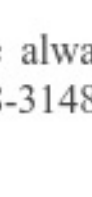
## PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION



This session two instrumental bills came out of the Maryland General Assembly concerning the Prince George's County Board of Education 1) HB 355 and 2) SB 444. HB 355 will establish the workgroup on the membership and operation of the Prince George's County Board of Education; requiring the workgroup

to study and make recommendations regarding the Board as to how to implement an electoral process for an all-elected board, appropriate compensation, and an appropriate phase-in period for changes to Board composition; requiring the Board to elect a chair and vice chair from the Board's members beginning on December 5, 2022; requiring that each member be provided with certain training materials. SB 444 is altering the boundaries of the school board districts for election of the members of the Prince George's County Board of Education.

## FINAL THOUGHTS SENATOR JOANNE C. BENSON



SENATE OF MARYLAND

I want to thank you for everything you have done in rendering unwavering support for a just, safe, prosperous place of peace and happiness. While we have endured some trials and tribulations, we have learned never to take anything for granted. We must be thankful for the small things and understand that our "Health is our Wealth." I look forward with excitement in seeing you and giving you a *Baptist Hug!*

Our office doors are always open. Please call if you have questions, comments or concerns at (301) 858-3148 or email: [joanne.benson@senate.state.md.us](mailto:joanne.benson@senate.state.md.us).

Gripped with Love,

**Joanne C. Benson**