

DEB'S DISTRICT UPDATE

Deb Jung • District Four

January–February 2026

Greetings

Six inches of snow, two inches of ice, and record-breaking cold temperatures turned our region into an Arctic tundra. I know the situation has been frustrating for many of us, particularly for students who walk to school on sidewalks that have not been shoveled. I am also aware that the depth and weight of the ice, some of it piled up from County snow plows, has made it difficult for residents to clear sidewalks and driveways. Thankfully, the week ahead will be in the 40s and 50s, perfect temperatures for melting and removing stubborn piles from pathways for our kids to get to school safely. Thank you all for keeping your sidewalks clear and for lending a hand to your neighbors who might need extra help with this job.

I've been thinking a lot about neighborliness as the news unfolded about Minneapolis residents resisting the aggressive tactics of ICE. Minneapolitans organized grassroots networks to warn each other about ICE activity, provided meals and assistance to impacted families, and braved cold weather to alert the nation and the world that they are under siege.

Last week, the County Council recently took its own action against ICE overreach. We passed emergency legislation to halt the opening of a private detention center in an Elkridge office building. Our community demonstrated the same deep-knit bonds and determination to stand up those unfairly targeted by ICE that Minneapolis modeled for our Country. I wholeheartedly supported this legislation and am thankful that the County Council took unanimous action to prohibit private detention centers. The details of the legislation and other bills that were passed last week are on the following pages.

Deb

Emergency Legislation

CB16 Prohibition of Private Detention Centers

This emergency bill — sponsored by the County Executive, myself, and Councilmembers Jones, Rigby, and Walsh — prohibits a privately owned office building in Elkridge from being used as an immigration detention facility.

On August 5, 2025, a private company on behalf of General Services Administration submitted a building permit to the County requesting "improvement of tenant spaces support areas, detention facility, detainee processing and secured waiting area." The permit was approved and construction work at the building is nearing completion.

CB16 makes changes to the Building Code that only Government agencies can apply, obtain, or hold a permit for detention facilities and that a granted permit can be revoked or suspended if the permit holder is not a Government agency.

I am so proud to be a sponsor on this legislation and I'm thankful for the opportunity to demonstrate our resolve to keep our immigrant community safe. I'm also thankful for the advocacy work of We Are Casa, Indivisible, Luminus, and numerous community advocates who stood up for what is right. Thank you for your testimony and for showing up at the public sessions multiple times in one week.

CB16 passed unanimously.

CB17 Guidance on Interacting with ICE

Councilmember Liz Walsh introduced emergency legislation to amend the Liberty Act by codifying guidance that the County Executive had issued to County employees for how to interact with ICE.

The legislation requires the following:

- ICE must have a judicial warrant to access County buildings or areas that aren't open to the public.
- ICE is prohibited from using County-controlled parking structures for detainment operations or surveillance.



County Council session introducing CB16 emergency legislation on February 3.

Live and archived meetings are on the Council's Watch Us webpage.

Emergency Legislation & Immigrant Resources

- County Administration must create immigration enforcement guidance for County employees.
- Departments shall train staff, designate an official for reporting, and notify the County Administration about ICE activity.

On the day of the vote, I was contacted by Union leaders representing a number of County employees that the County Executive's guidance should be a part of their negotiated contracts. Union representatives were unaware that the County policy was also being codified by CB17. Because CB17 was filed as emergency legislation, we did not hold a worksession, discuss fine-tuning the bill, or solicit feedback from major stakeholders, including our County employees. The condensed schedule also didn't allow time for the usual amendment process.

During the vote, I lobbied for amendments that advanced the Union's position and asked for additional amendments to clarify reporting procedures. But these amendments were unsuccessful.

I also voted for an unsuccessful motion to table the bill. My vote caused concern and criticism from the advocates who lobbied for swift action on the bill. I understand their urgency but it is also my duty to look out for County employees who are now required to comply with CB17 without running afoul of ICE.

Legally, the County can not block ICE from entering County buildings or spaces that are open to the public and interference with immigration enforcement is punishable by Federal law. We have seen that ICE plays by its own rules and my requests to spend more time on the bill was for the sole purpose of shielding our County employees from liability.

I cast the fourth vote that enabled the successful passage of CB17.

Upcoming Meetings

- February 17, 7pm: Public Hearing
- February 23, 10am: Work Session
- March 2, 7pm: Legislative Session
- March 9, 10am: Monthly Meeting
- March 16, 7pm: Public Hearing

Visit the Council's Calendar webpage for more.



Current legislation can be found on the Council's Legislation webpage.

Emergency Legislation & Immigrant Resources

Howard County Liberty Act

The Liberty Act, passed in 2020, prevents the use of County resources for the enforcement of Federal immigration laws, sharing individuals' information, and asking or sharing citizenship or immigration status.

State Efforts

On February 3, both chambers of the Maryland General Assembly voted to end local law enforcements' cooperation agreements, known as 287(g) agreements, with ICE. The State Senate approved a ban on all law enforcement officers, including Federal agents, from wearing face coverings while on duty in most situations. The House has a similar bill that is still in process. Maryland's Attorney General advised that a face mask ban on Federal agents is likely unconstitutional.

Respect, Record, Report

These legislative efforts follow the disturbing news that US citizens were murdered by ICE agents in Minneapolis and aggressive ICE activity has occurred in Howard County.

If you do witness ICE activity in Howard County, I urge you to exercise caution for your own safety. You have every right to document the incident but please do not physically engage with agents or approach them. If you feel threatened or witness threatening behavior, please call 911, and HCPD will respond. Please stay safe, stay informed, and take care of yourself and your loved ones.

Immigrant Resources

Several organizations provide services to families in Howard County who might be impacted by ICE detentions. These groups accept donations from the community.

- **Luminus** provides legal services to immigrants and their family. Visit their website
- **Community Action Council** operates the Howard County food bank, provides energy bill assistance, and other early education. Visit their website.
- **We Are Casa** offers immigrant supports, political advocacy, job services, and legal advice. Visit their website.

African American History Month

During the month of February, the National Museum of African American History & Culture is recognizing Althea Gibson, the first African American to win the Grand Slam title at the 1957 French Championships for tennis. She was also the first Black woman to compete on the Ladies Professional Golf Association in 1967. The US Mint celebrated her accomplishments with a commemorative coin released in 2025.



Adopted legislation can be found on the Council's Legislation Search webpage.

Council Update

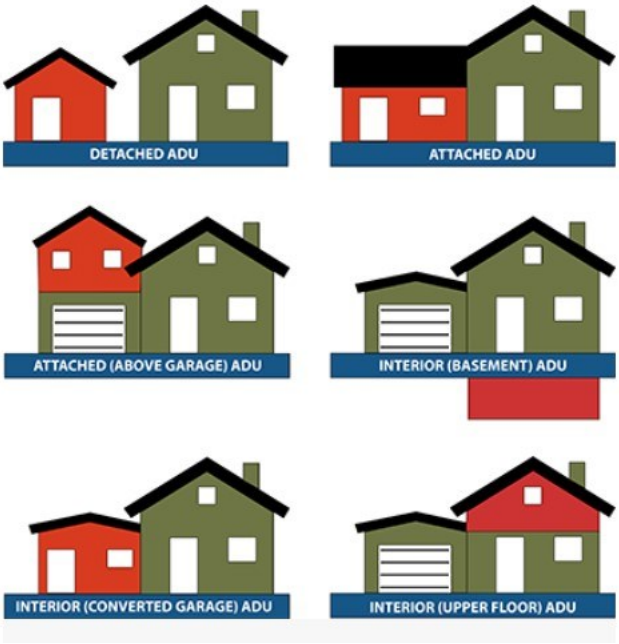
January-February Legislation

The following bills were introduced on January 5 and were voted on February 2.

CB3 Accessory Dwelling Units

A State bill that passed last year requires local jurisdictions to adopt zoning regulations to allow for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in all single family zoning districts. ADUs are defined as either separate living spaces that are detached from the main house or attached to the main house.

The State's intention was to increase density in existing neighborhoods dominated by single family homes. High housing costs and a declining population has led State decision makers to conclude that more housing is needed. Recent population data found that younger adults make up half the State's population loss. This is a fairly new trend compared to the more typical population loss of retirees to southern States.



Types of ADUs: Attached and Detached

According to a *Baltimore Banner* article ("Maryland's Mortgage Divide: Recent Buyers Pay Drastically More than Longtime Homeowners"), new homeowners in 2023 and 2024 had mortgage payments that were $1000 to $2800 more than the statewide median and 47% more than home mortgages purchased between 2015-2019. Buying a home is expensive in Maryland and Howard County has one of the state's highest monthly mortgage costs in the state.

I pointed out at the Legislative session on this bill that homeownership should be the focus of future housing efforts. People want to buy homes that they can afford with the degrees and jobs that they have earned.

CB3 as originally proposed did not promote new homeownership and could have enabled real estate speculation. The original bill allowed two family dwelling units as well as ADUs without owner occupancy requirements in all single family zoning districts. Thankfully, the County Executive submitted two amendments that reinstated two family dwelling units as a conditional use rather than by right and introduced an owner occupancy requirement for ADUs.

Council Update

I sponsored a successful amendment that allows detached ADUs only for single family detached homes, which have private backyards and driveways. Originally the bill allowed detached ADUs for townhouses and duplexes.

A successful amendment from Councilmember Yungmann limited the size of ADUs in relationship to the size of the lot and required stormwater considerations. The original proposal limited ADUs to 75% of the primary house and adherence to rear and side setbacks only.

I do worry that new ADUs will cause increased landlord-tenant conflicts, that parking might be chaotic and frustrating, and that flooding might occur if a neighbor builds a new house in the backyard. I'm willing to make adjustments to this law as we see the real-world impact.

I also hope that future housing bills from the State recognize that there is an unmet demand for missing middle homes for sale. I believe that our County can promote affordability, support our aging community, encourage homeownership, and protect our environment without waging war on single family neighborhoods. Preserving neighborhood character was identified as a priority in our General Plan and it is not the culprit of of our current challenges.

CB7 Non interference with Boards & Commissions

This bill prohibits Councilmembers and their staff from hindering, obstructing, or disrupting deliberations or decisions of any Board or Commission. According to our County Solicitor, this means that Councilmembers or their staff can't cause a commotion or disrupt a Board or Commission meeting. To my knowledge, this has never happened.

The bill also states that the Council as a body can't give orders to a Board or Commission member or staff. This doesn't occur and doesn't need to be legislated.

Korean American Day



I was so honored to celebrate Korean American Day on January 13, marking the arrival of the first 102 Korean immigrants to Hawaii in 1903. Thank you to LOKA and the event organizers for inviting me. I always look forward to this annual tradition.

Council Update

The final component of the bill prohibits direct or indirect intimidation by Councilmembers or their staff. It is my understanding that these appointed bodies are protected from direct reprisal through a Charter- or code-defined removal process. For the Board of Appeals, it takes three Councilmember votes to remove a member. Other Boards have disqualifying criteria and a vote as well.

My main issue with this part of the bill is the sponsors' interpretation of "intimidation." The sponsors have expressed the belief that intimidation includes Councilmembers attending public Board of Appeals' meetings or public gatherings related to Board of Appeals' cases. The Office of Law explained that Board meetings are open to the public and can't have attendance prohibitions. Further, Board Members, Commissioners, and Councilmembers are public facing roles and by design face criticism for their decisions. The ability to criticize is what the First Amendment protects. Individuals of the Council can operate in their individual fashion and no piece of legislation can curtail that independence, which was given to them by the voters. Each Councilmember answers to the people who put them in office. Councilmembers represent their voters not their colleagues or those colleagues favored special interest.

If this bill were promoting good governance than it would prohibit ex parte communication, which is communication between one party or their representative without the presence or knowledge of the other parties. Prohibitions on ex parte communication already exist and should be respected by all members of the Council, Boards, and Commissions, as well interested parties and their attorneys.

The bill as originally proposed only applied to Councilmembers so I successfully amended it to include the County Executive and their staff from interfering with Boards and Commissions. I also had an amendment to exclude day-to-day operations of Council offices; delivery of constituent services; appearance and participation in public meetings and gatherings; communication with the public about Board decisions and member conduct; and protections of First Amendment rights.

MLK Celebration & Awards Ceremony

On January 18, the County celebrated the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and recognized the annual award winners as follows:

"Living the Dream" Service Award

- Jasleen Multani
- Ellison Taylor
- Luminus Network

Student Contest Winners

- Deebsha Khadaka
- Grace Baker
- Juha Ho
- Sravika Bolla
- Kono Paige Olowokakoko
- Reese Aderton



Council Update

I enumerated these rights and responsibilities to highlight the attempts by the sponsors to curtail Councilmembers' ability to perform the basic requirements of their jobs or advocate for their community. *Sponsored by Councilmembers Rigby, Jones, and Yungmann; passed as amended*

CB2 Property Tax Credit for Disabled Law Enforcement, Rescue Workers, or Surviving Spouses

This bill aligns the County tax credit with changes that occurred through State legislation. *Sponsored by the County Executive; passed*

CB4 Activity Centers

This bill adds a requirement for two types of housing on parcels five acres or greater in certain commercial areas along Route 40 and Route 1. *Sponsored by the County Executive; withdrawn.*

CR19 Landscape Manual Update

This manual update reduced the number of required tree plantings on new developments and added small trees and shrubs as planting options to reduce overcrowding and erosion. I sponsored a successful amendment, suggested by the Sierra Club, to require native plants for all housing types. I also reinstated the tree planting ratios from the current manual for apartments. The rationale for the change was that current ratios result in tree die off. But I have yet to see too many trees planting at any of the new apartment complexes that have been built in Columbia in the last five years. *Sponsored by the County Executive; passed as amended*

CB5 Posting of Biographical Information for Boards & Commissions Appointments

This bill requires as a condition to be appointed to a board or commission that the nominee waives the State confidentiality requirements of personnel records so that their resume or biographical information can be posted online along with the nominating legislation. *Sponsored by David Yungmann; passed*.

2026 Council Leadership Roles

County Council

- Chair: Dr. Opel Jones (District 2)
- Vice Chair: Christiana Rigby (District 3)

Zoning Board

- Chair: David Yungmann (District 5)
- Vice Chair: Deb Jung (District 4)

Board of License Commissioners

- Chair: David Yungmann (District 5)
- Vice Chair: Christiana Rigby

Maryland Association of Counties (MACo)

- Representative: Christiana Rigby
- Alternate: Deb Jung

FY27 HCPSS Budget Update

FY27 Operating Budget

The BOE began its annual review of the Superintendent's proposed Operating Budget; visit HCPSS's Budget FY27 webpage for more.

Key Dates:

- February 19, 1pm: Worksession
- February 26, 7pm: Budget Adoption

Highlights: The Superintendent's FY27 budget proposes $1.278 billion, an increase of $61.9 million above FY26. The State share is $386.2 million and the County request is $878 million. HCPSS will also use $3 million from fund balance and $10 million from other sources.

This year's budget continues the multi-year shift of funding from general education to the Blueprint focus areas of special education, pre-kindergarten expansion, and multilingual learner education.

Total enrollment is down 258 students resulting in an approximate $3.7 million reduction in the County's maintenance of effort funding and elimination of general education positions.

General education reductions

Reduction of 34.6 positions, including

- 6.3 high-school teachers
- 18 elementary teachers

Additional reduction of 54 positions, including

- 5 middle school paraeducators
- 20 middle school media paraeducators
- 13 science support paraeducators
- 14 media specialists

Special Education

- Increase of $4.5 million for non-public placements due to projected enrollment and reduction of State's cost split from 60% to 50%
- Increase of $1.3 million and 23.1 positions

Multilingual Learners

- Increase of 11 full-time English language teachers funded by eliminating 20 paraeducator positions

Pre-kindergarten

- Increase of $2.4 million and 25 positions

Athletic Trainers

- $1.28 million for 13 full-time trainers and elimination of contracted trainers

Staff salaries & benefits

- Increase of $32.6 million for staff pay and $18 million for health insurance costs

Bus contracts

- Increase of $5.5 million

Visit HCPSS News webpage for more.

HCPSS Update

Fee Increases

The Board of Education (BOE) voted to increase fees for summer school programs as follows:

- Gifted & Talented Summer Institutes will increase from $320 to $470.
- Black Student Achievement Program Summer Institute will increase from $700 to $1100.

The BOE is also discussing charging for student bus transportation to and from school as well as student athletics and community use of facilities and athletic fields.

HCPSS Graduation Rates

The Class of 2025 achieved a graduation rate of 91.3%, down from 93.5% for the Class of 2024. The State average also declined from 87.6% for the Class of 2024 to 86.4% for the Class of 2025.

Second Grade Art Showcase Reception

February 18, 5-6pm

The public is invited to attend the 2026 Second Grade Art Showcase Reception at the Howard County Department of Education Central Office on Route 108.

HBCU College and Career Fair

March 7, 9am-2pm

Open to all interested students and families, HCPSS will host its second annual Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) College and Career Fair at Guilford Park High School. Register online.

Special Education Resource Fair

March 14, 10am-1pm

HCPSS will host a Special Education Resource Fair at the Cedar Lane School. The free event will provide families with information from the community and HCPSS to support their students receiving special education.

Judges Needed for History Day

March 21

HCPSS is seeking judges for its 22nd District National History Day competition held at Guilford Park High School. During this event, students present their historical research projects in one of five categories: documentary, performance, exhibit, website, or historical paper. Judging involves a brief time commitment prior to the competition to review category rules and scoring rubrics.

On competition day, judges should be available from approximately 8am-1pm. Those interested in being a judge can register online.



County & Community Updates

First County Inspector General

Kelly Madigan, previously the Inspector General in Baltimore County, has been selected as our first Inspector General. In her new position, she will be tasked with setting up the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to investigate any claims of fraud, waste, and abuse in Howard County Government. The OIG can be reached at 410-313-2115 or the County's Inspector General webpage. .

High BGE Bills

Recent cold temperatures are going to hurt a lot of households pay rising energy bills. Many residents have contacted me to understand why BGE bills have skyrocketed.

There are two components – supply and distribution – that contribute to expensive BGE bills for residential customers. Maryland is a net importer of energy and is part of a regional transmission organization called PJM (referring to the original partners of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland). PJM's recent capacity auction for energy supply has hit record highs because of inadequate power generation due to retiring plants and rising demand, largely attributed to data centers.

The other contributing factor to high utility bills is the increased cost of energy distribution to residential customers. Since 2020, BGE gas distribution rates have increased 58% and electric delivery rates have increased 33%. Distribution rates have increased because of infrastructure investments, such as electric wires, poles, substations, and other capital and equipment improvements.

The Maryland Office of People's Counsel, which advocates for utility customers, issued these cost-saving recommendations:

- lower the thermostat one to two degrees
- monitor your utility bill using the BGE app so that you're aware of your monthly bill
- get help paying your utility bill if you fall behind on payments.

If you're struggling to pay your BGE bill, take action sooner rather than later. See tips for accessing financial assistance on the Office of People's Counsel Financial Help webpage:

Read more about the energy auction in this *Baltimore Sun* article. The Office of People's Counsel explains energy prices on its Why is My Winter BGE Bill So High webpage.

Snow Shoveling Help

Residents are responsible for clearing the snow on their sidewalks but this year has been difficult because of the amount of snow and ice as well as the duration of cold temperatures. Maryland Access Point (call 211) connects seniors and those with disabilities with snow shoveling assistance provided by local non-profits and volunteers.

Keeping up with Deb



Safeway Grand Reopening





Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity's Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Breakfast

Keeping up with Deb



CB16 (Prohibition of Private Detention Centers) Bill Signing



League of Korean American Celebration



Lunar New Year Celebration



Lake Elkhorn MS Community Night



Giant Grand Reopening

Upcoming Events

Eyes on the Prize Film Screening & Discussion

Howard County Public Library, Central Branch
February 18, 5:45pm
Watch and discuss this acclaimed civil rights documentary series as part of Black History Month programming. Visit the Library's Calendar event webpage to register in advance.

Black Business Bazaar

February 28, 12–3 pm
Maryland Innovation Center, 6751 Columbia Gateway Drive
The County's Economic Development Authority (EDA) will host a community marketplace celebrating Black-owned businesses. Visit EDA's Upcoming Events webpage for more.



Howard County Women's History Month Celebration

March 14, 5.30-7.30pm
East Columbia 50+ Center
Panel discussion, awards, and dinner celebrate women's leadership and achievements in the community. Visit Howard County Commission for Women webpage for more.

Bernice Kish Gallery

Slayton House, Wilde Lake Village
Current and future art exhibitions include:

- Until February 22: Anne Calamuci's conceptual portrait photography
- March 1, 3-5pm: Opening reception for Ronni Jolles' Beyond the Boundaries

Mega Job/Internship Fair

March 19, 10am–2pm
Howard Community College
Career and internship fair is open to HCC students and the public.

Columbia Orchestra

Performances are at 7.30pm in the Jim Rouse Theater unless otherwise noted.

- March 14: Rhythms of Renewal featuring works by Camille Saint-Saëns' Danse Bacchanale; Viet Cuong's Re(new)al percussion concerto; and Sergei Rachmaninoff's Symphonic Dances
- April 11: Cinematic Pops including music from *King Kong*, *Star Trek*, *The Shape of Water*, and *Star Wars*
- May 1, 7.30pm: The One & Only Sammy Nestico at Wilde Lake Interfaith Center
- May 16: Soundscapes of Contrast featuring Gabriela Ortiz' Kauyumari, Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3, and Carl Nielsen's Symphony No. 2
- June 27: Classical Music for People with Short Attention Spans

Visit the Columbia Orchestra's Events webpage for more.