

Monthly Report for Mayor Takisha D. James



Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks, Dr. Judith Williams (Principal of Bladensburg Elementary), Mrs. Battle (Assistant Principal of Bladensburg Elementary), and a few of their students attended the Grand Opening of the Bladensburg Branch Library.

Town of Bladensburg

4229 Edmonston Road, Bladensburg, MD 20710

(301) 927-7048 | tjames@bladensburgmd.gov

November Activities & Meetings

November 1:

Bladensburg Branch Library Grand

Opening Ceremony | The Prince George's Memorial Library System invited the Town of Bladensburg to join in the grand opening ceremony. The community has been patiently waiting for our new facility for many years, so it was gratifying to participate in this highly anticipated event. We heard remarks from Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks, County Council Member Jolene Ivey, and Library System and Board of Directors representatives. I was also given the honor of delivering remarks during the ceremony. I ended by noting this facility is an important component of our community. I quoted R. David Lankes, who once said, "Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services, great libraries build communities." On behalf of the residents of Bladensburg, our sister communities in the Port Towns, and other neighboring communities, I want to thank everyone who had a role in investing in and constructing a great library that will help us continue to build a great community.



Candlelight Vigil for Mrs. Jemilat Amope Tiwalade Fatuga | The Bladensburg Police Department did a wonderful job organizing a candlelight vigil to honor the life of Mrs. Tiwalade Fatuga. She was tragically killed in a hit-and-run accident on Annapolis Road on Wednesday, October 18 while trying to cross Annapolis Road to catch the bus to work. Her family was still attempting to deal with the shocking news of her accident and passing, so the vigil served to provide a time for support and healing as we talked about the positive impact she had on others. Chief Collington and I spoke during the vigil and affirmed our commitment to working to get justice for Mrs. Tiwalade Fatuga and her family.

November 3: Meeting Regarding a Scholarship Opportunity | Since becoming mayor, I have had the desire to create a scholarship to provide a young lady from the Bladensburg community with a free education at Elizabeth Seton High School. The outstanding academic offerings of Seton can prove life-changing by opening new educational and employment opportunities that would otherwise not be available. It seems we are coming closer to making this a reality. Dr. Grillo and Mrs. Boursiquot are committed to this vision, so I connected them to the family of Former Mayor David Harrington so we can leverage the Harrington Foundation to serve as the vehicle to receive funds for the purpose of awarding this scholarship. We are working through the necessary planning to firm this up with the Harrington family and look forward to announcing this program's launch in 2024.

November 3:

Attended the Funeral Service for Mrs. Jemilat Amope Tiwalade Fatuga | Chief Collington, Major Dickerson, Lt. Poole, Lt. Frishkorn, Council Member McBryde, Council Member Brown, Council Member-Elect Dixon and I joined the family and friends of Mrs. Tiwalade Fatuga to celebrate her life. During the service, Chief Collington and I were able to give words of encouragement to the family. Given the sudden nature surrounding her passing, many relatives were not able to travel to the United States for the service. A streaming link was set up for them to view the services, which allowed us to offer encouragement to her family and friends attending the remotely from Nigeria. We will continue to pray for her family and offer support where we can, to help them heal through the grieving process.

City of Mount Rainier Police Department Centennial Gala | The First Gentleman and I were pleased to join Council Member McBryde, Chief Collington, and members of the Bladensburg Police Department for this momentous occasion. The Mt. Rainier Police Department has achieved so many accomplishments over its 100-year history, and I'm grateful for the support and positive working relationship between Chief Alston (Mt. Rainier Police Department) and Chief Collington as well as our officers. It was also wonderful to see the Bladensburg Honor Guard participate in the ceremony.



November 4: District 47 Leaders Breakfast | Senator Malcolm Augustine hosted the final meeting of the year in Mt. Rainier. He gave a preview of the 2024 legislative session. We offered Senator Augustine input on his priorities such as Extension/Permanent Funding of the 988 Programs, Elderly Financial Exploitation Protections, and Automatic Admissions for the Top 10% of institutions of higher learning. He also noted there would be efforts to amend SB696 – Prince George’s County Gateway Development Authority to include removing blighted properties, assessing streetscapes, penalizing owners who fail to maintain properties, and more. See *Attachment A* for more information.

A highlight of the meeting was hearing from Secretary Paul Monteiro, Jr., Maryland Department of Service & Civic Innovation. Secretary Monteiro spoke about the senior service year option that his office is spearheading. This can be a great option for high school graduates who are not sure of what they want to do after graduation. He also noted they are working to expand it to senior-aged residents who may be retired but are still in a position to give back to society by volunteering. One of the unique qualities of this program is it brings a broad group of people together beyond their differences. A 300-person cohort launched this fall and is off to a good start.

During the Q&A session, I asked for support with stiffening laws to address organized retail theft across the state. This issue is affecting many communities and the penalties should be tighter to discourage this type of criminal activity. Additionally, the sentence should include a requirement for providing restitution for the total value of the theft, in addition to offering support with identifying and addressing the underlying issues leading to this behavior.

November 6: PGCMA Legislative Committee Meeting | During the meeting, we reviewed the legislative priorities submitted by members along with the Prince George’s Mayors Group. Common themes centered around opposition to the Maglev, juvenile justice reform, reconsideration of support for zoning authority for municipalities, addressing modified mufflers, increased funding for stormwater management, enhanced cyclist and pedestrian safety, and more. We spent a significant amount of time reviewing the merits of the recommendations and determining which required more information before we could fully assess the recommendations. The reason for the extended discussion was to prepare for the Annual Legislative Reception, where we present our priorities to the county, state, and federal officials and their staff.

November 6: Meeting with State Highway Administration | Following the tragic death of Mrs. Tiwalade Fatuga who was struck and killed on Annapolis Road, I reached out to SHA for a meeting with District 3 Engineer Mr. Gunn and his team. We were able to meet in early November to discuss concerns for improving pedestrian safety along Annapolis Road. Senator Malcolm Augustine, TA Bailey-Hedgepeth, Chief Collington, Council Member Brown and I attended the meeting along with representatives from the State Highway Administration. We brainstormed about opportunities to improve the area in the short term as well as the long term. Initial steps included reviewing lighting in the area and determining how we can make



improvements. We noted the Town would be open to replacing the light bulbs in the area if SHA found it would not be possible to cover this expense. We also inquired about a traffic light and the addition of a clearly marked pedestrian crosswalk at the intersection of Annapolis Road and 54th Street. Senator Augustine also suggested we look into contacting WMATA and The Bus about the possibility of moving the stops to nearby intersections where we have clearly marked pedestrian crossings. Mr. Gunn noted he would have the traffic unit research the area to determine if this is possible or another solution.

November 11: Veterans Day

Celebration | I appreciate Ms. Renee Green, who leads the Bladensburg Patriotic Team, for organizing the annual celebration of our veterans. The ceremony was well attended and supported by American Legion Post #131. The ceremony was attended by Delegate Diana Fennell, Senator Malcolm Augustine, County Council Member Jolene Ivey, the Bladensburg Town Council, and elected officials from the other Port Towns. I want to thank the Public Works team for their support in setting up for the event and the



cleanup efforts following the program, along with the Bladensburg Police Department, who provided traffic support, ensuring attendees were safe in crossing Annapolis Road to get to the event. It was an honor to join with so many people in celebrating our veterans. We were also encouraged to support our veterans by ending the stigma around mental health and “Be the one to save one veteran”. To learn more about this initiative visit: <https://www.legion.org/betheone>.

November 17: Prep Meeting with NOW Foundation regarding the Thanksgiving Meal

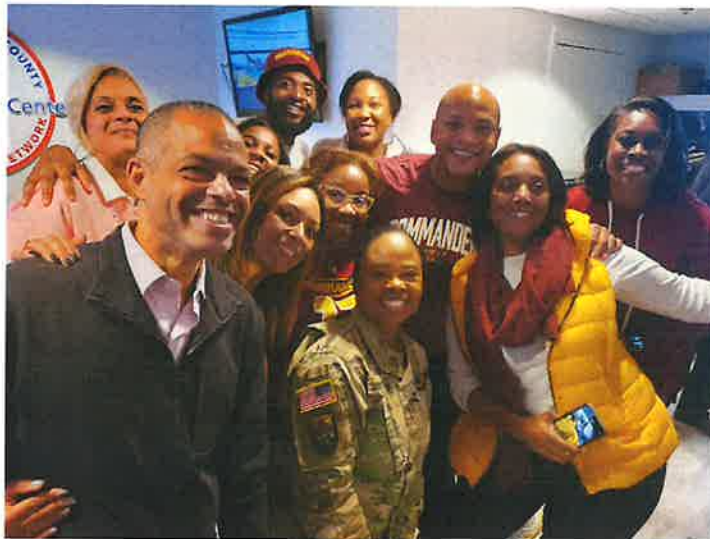
Distribution | The Town Administrator and I met with Mr. Williams, Founder of NOW Foundation to ensure our plans were complete for the Thanksgiving Dinner giveaway on November 18th.

November 18: Thanksgiving Meal

Distribution | The Town of Bladensburg held our annual Thanksgiving Food Distribution Event in partnership with Victory Grace Center (VGC) and NOW Foundation. The event went extremely well and was so well organized thanks to the support from our non-profit partners. In addition, we had over 100 student volunteers who showed up bright and early to support the event. I’m so proud of how hard the students and adult volunteers worked to make this event a success. I want to extend a special THANK YOU to Principal Faulkner-Jones for making Bladensburg High School and key staff members available to support this event.



Holding this event without coordination with our local public high school and non-profit partners would have been quite difficult and diminished our ability to serve the community. I also am grateful for Town Administrator Bailey-Hedgepeth for taking the planning off of my plate and leading the charge with staff to ensure we were prepared for the event. Also, I must thank the Code Enforcement, Public Works, Police, and Administrative departments for their support as well.



November 19: Employ Prince George's Networking event | First Gentleman Walter James and I were invited to attend the Washington Commanders game by the Employ Prince George's CEO Walter Simmons. The occasion was the celebration of their business and government partners. Attending this event also afforded opportunities to follow up on our meeting from October and consider additional ways to collaborate. Mayor Casanas was also in attendance, so we discussed the possibility of doing a Port Towns collaboration with Employ

Prince George's, given the success of the job fair Employ Prince George's held with the Town of Bladensburg in 2022. Additionally, I'm working to identify a location for a job center in Bladensburg where we can have a computer setup with access to their job center. This would allow residents to visit that location to view and apply for available jobs. The Employ Prince George's team is also interested in partnering with the Bladensburg Trade School, so we'll be in touch about that as well.

November 27: PGCMMA Legislative Committee Meeting | The Committee met again to revisit and work to refine the legislative priorities in preparation for the upcoming Legislative Reception, where the legislative priorities will be shared with our legislators.

November 28:

Bladensburg Business Owner Meeting | Chief Collington, TA Bailey-Hedgepeth, and I met with business owners to connect and understand their concerns. The meeting also allowed us the opportunity to update them on town projects and initiatives. This group was meeting regularly before the pandemic and we will resume in Q1 2024.

Port Towns Quarterly Meeting | Members of the Town Council attended the meeting to continue collaborating with our sister towns.

District 4: Community Forum on Rising Crime Hosted by County Council Member Ingrid Watson | Council Member Watson held this event to bring members of the County together to discuss the challenges we are facing as it relates to juvenile crime. She also wanted to allow community members the opportunity to talk and brainstorm on solutions. Increases in carjackings, armed robbery, illegal guns, etc. have continued to climb, so this event was an effort to encourage the community to come together and take swift action. We heard presentations from Prince George's County Chief of Police Malik Aziz, Prince George's County States Attorney Aisha Braveboy, Prince George's County School Superintendent Millard House, II. A highlight was the remarks from a student from Bowie High School sharing the challenges students face when attending school and having to be faced with reports of violence.

Senator Ron Watson noted a bipartisan group of concerned Senators have come together to address these issues raised by our community. He also collected input from various community stakeholders, including law enforcement, legal, parents, the faith-based community, etc.

Attachment B contains the details of the proposed legislation to tackle these issues. I will share this information with the Town Council in hopes we will take a stand to work with the state legislature to address the rise in juvenile crime.

November 28: Bladensburg Branch Library Opens to the Public | While still working through final permitting challenges, the library's first floor was formally opened to the public. This was indeed a very exciting day after all of the time waiting for the facility to be built. I encourage everyone to take the time to visit.



Senator Malcolm Augustine

2024 Legislative Constituent Memorandum

November 4th, 2023 – Leadership Breakfast

Amend SB696 - Prince George's County Gateway Development Authority

Amend to include the removal of blighted properties, assessment of streetscapes, penalizing owners who fail to maintain properties, façade improvements, Port Town redevelopment, and overall quality of life. Add the Prince George's County Revenue Authority as administrator.

Service Year Option for Seniors

This legislation would be modeled after the current service year option but geared towards senior citizens 65+.

Circuit Rider Program

This legislation would increase awareness and funding for the Circuit Rider Program – expansion. The fund would provide a 50% match in funding up to \$50,000 for communities under 10,000 residents to hire a professional administrator/manager.

Small Business Development

The office is working with the Department of Commerce discussing effective ways to ensure small businesses prosper in District 47.

Neighborhood/Civic Association Funding

The office is working with DHCD on options for implementing a fund on the state level in support of these organizations.

Housing Security Assistance for Seniors

The office is working with the Department of Housing and Community Development on options for assisting seniors with staying in their homes.

Electric Vehicles

The office is looking into room for improvement with electric vehicles. Specifically, the Town of Brentwood's request to introduce funding/programs that support underserved/low-income families purchase electric vehicles.

Additional Legislative Priorities

- Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits – Mental Health
- Photographs on Disabled Placards – Vehicle
- Statewide Electronics Recycling Program
- Extension/Permanent Funding of the 988 Program
- Third Party Retail Energy Supplier Reformation
- State Board of Examiners in Optometry Licensing Reform
- EUSP/MEAP Energy Assistance Program
- ✕ Automatic Admissions for the Top 10% to MD institutions of higher learning
- Crisis hotline number placement on student ID cards beginning with 6th graders.
- MD Metro Funding Act of 2024
- Administration of Vaccines – Pharmacists
- Elderly Financial Exploitation Protections

Colleague Support

A number of constituents reached out about legislation regarding artificial intelligence and the Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program. Senator Augustine spoke with the sponsors, Senator Washington and Senator Hester, and will support their efforts in passing this in the 2024 Legislative Session. Senator Augustine will also be supporting the 2-man crew legislation sponsored by Senator Ellis.

- Reduction of food deserts in the state
- Smarter commercial development for underserved districts
- Support of pollinator-friendly zones and projects
- Smarter gun laws that target criminals and not responsible firearm owners
- Ban the sale of assault rifles (AR-15, AR Pistols, Heavy Barrel (HB) rifles, etc.)
- Create and fund a permanent state program that offsets the cost of childcare, which is unaffordable to all but the very wealthy, and improves the wages/standard of living for childcare workers (examples: [New Mexico](#), [Vermont](#)). Our state should be leading on this, not lagging behind; and
- Additional financial support and incentives for minority owned cannabis related businesses.
- Speed control measures for State Roads (i.e. Riggs Road)
- Additional support for safe pedestrians and bicyclists (i.e. additional sidewalks and bike lanes) state-wide
- Litter control around the state
- Vegetation control & beautification efforts along state roads
- Additional support to county governments, non-profits, and other community organizations in unincorporated areas (storm water, flooding, litter, etc.)
- Additional police officers for higher crime areas
- Additional activity programs for at-risk youth.
- Designated Navigators for Seniors 65+
- Designated Navigators for English Language Learners
- Aging in Place Task Force
- College & Career Days
- Meeting Spaces for Neighborhood/Civic Associations
- Cut Patient to Nurse Ratio at Rehab Centers
- Senior Expo - Modeled after Silver Spring
- Civic HOA Grant Program

COMMUNITY FORUM ON RISING CRIME – PARTICIPANT PACKAGE

Since the General Assembly adjourned in April, Maryland has experienced a significant increase of highly visible crimes including carjackings, retail theft, guns and juveniles. A bipartisan group of concerned Senators have come together to address these issues raised by our community. I have received input from law enforcement, State's Attorneys, business owners, parents, M-NCPPC, members of the clergy, the NAACP and our friends and neighbors throughout the 23rd Legislative District, and Councilmanic District 4, who demand that action be taken now.

We are here as one united community to set forth several possible initiatives that might make a difference in the upcoming 2024 Legislative Session. The authors of the bills summarized below are prepared to work with our Governor, law enforcement, groups such as Moms Demand Action, and virtually anyone who wants to see peace and safety restored in our communities *with* appropriate aspects of restorative justice.



How Restorative Justice Works

The bills are divided into five sections, each dealing with a different aspect of the State's crime problem. Each section contains a description of multiple bills that will be introduced in the General Assembly 2024 90-day Legislative Session, January - April. These bills provide a starting point so that we as a community can come together, discuss, modify, add, and ultimately have a crime-package that we can all get behind and present to the Governor.

Just as there are many fish in the sea, many suggestions for fighting crime will certainly bubble up to the surface in the next several months. The ideas set forth above are merely the suggestions of a small group of State Senators, law enforcement and concerned community residents and certainly not an exhaustive list. The ultimate goal is a package of bipartisan legislation that can be passed in the Maryland General Assembly and that will have a measurable impact on crime in Maryland and in particular, Prince George's County.

A. Closing gaps in our criminal laws and providing for stiffer penalties for repeat offenders

1. **The Violent Firearms Offender Act (LR1125).** State Senator Ron Watson will be sponsoring this bill with Senators Anthony Muse, Chris West and Mary Beth Carozza as co-sponsors. Last year's SB 744 was an omnibus bill which never received a vote. As slightly expanded, this year's bill will make several changes to the law: First, it labels as a felony instead of as a misdemeanor (as at present) the use of a firearm with a magazine holding more than ten rounds of ammunition or an assault weapon in the commission of a felony or a crime of violence. Second, the bill delays parole eligibility for prohibited persons who are caught possessing firearms. Third, it provides that a person caught illegally possessing a firearm is guilty of a misdemeanor and is subject to up to five years imprisonment for the first offense and is guilty of a felony and is subject to up to ten years in jail for any subsequent offenses. Also specifies that the use or possession of a firearm while under parole, probation, or mandatory supervision is not a technical violation. This bill targets repeat violent offenders. This bill would also require the Commissioner of Correction to provide inmates with a re-entry kit and with assistance in obtaining Medicaid benefits upon the inmate's release from prison which include: (1) At least 1 week of supplies for basic human needs, (2) an ID card, (3) Contact information for entities specializing in re-entry services, housing assistance, substance use treatment, and mental health services, and (4) Assistance in obtaining Medicaid benefits.

COMMENTS, MODIFICATIONS, SUPPORT?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

3. Organized Retail Theft (LR1135). State Senator Ron Watson will be sponsoring this bill with Senators Mary Beth Carozza and Chris West. This bill seeks to stop the wanton brazenness of those who steal from our retailers knowing there will be little to no repercussions. In fact, there have been several accounts of individuals who will sell these stolen good at local flea markets. We have all seen images of flash mob theft and vandalism. This bill will make it illegal for anyone to organize or participate in a theft for profit scheme by recruiting or directing another individual(s) to commit organized retail theft. If the total value of all items stolen, in the aggregate, amount to over \$1,500, each individual involved in the organized theft will be guilty of a felony. The term "aggregate" will be defined to include organized theft occurring in multiple jurisdictions. In computing the total value of items stolen, any resulting cost to the proprietor of the establishment from which the items were stolen to repair, replace and restock will be added to the aggregate cost of the items stolen. This bill, supported by the Retailers Association, will also allow for the value of thefts to be aggregated across county lines. *NOTE: felony theft thresholds, \$1500 to \$2500 = 5 yrs, \$2500 to \$100K = 10 yrs, over \$100K = 20 yrs*

COMMENTS, MODIFICATIONS, SUPPORT?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

4. Protection at the Pump (LR1175). State Senator Ron Watson and Joanne C. Benson will be sponsoring this local Prince George's County bill. The District and Prince George's County have accounted for almost all of the region's reported carjackings in recent years, according to statistics. Most carjackings take place between 10PM and 2AM, and most often in a busy commercial area where cars are parked and when the owner is entering or exiting the parked vehicle. Women driving alone, disabled persons and senior citizens are particularly vulnerable. We have all seen video of what can happen when a person exits their vehicle, especially at gas stations. This bill provides an option for citizens who prefer to remain in their vehicles, or otherwise vulnerable citizens, and those in high crime areas when pumping their gas. This bill requires an attendant to be available during the hours of 6AM and Midnight at all gas stations in Prince George's County. This bill also requires gas stations in Prince George's County to mount security cameras on their premises filming activities that occur outside the gas station in the vicinity of the pumps so that law enforcement will be able to quickly understand how any criminal activity in that vicinity occurred.

COMMENTS, MODIFICATIONS, SUPPORT?

-Security cameras make sense, but add that the criteria for the cameras will be set forth by the PD or County Council.

- Add that they will have a security assessment after 2 or more violent crimes at the locations and it will be filed with the PD

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

5. Maryland Firearm Detection Platform Act (LR1317). Senator Ron Watson will sponsor this bill with Senator Mary Beth Carozza as co-sponsor. In recent months, we have seen mass shootings at Bowie State University and Morgan State University. Mass shootings like these occur when many people are gathered publicly. Our Colleges and Universities are uniquely susceptible to these random acts of violence as these are places that hold sporting events, homecoming, parades, protests, concerts, and other social activities that are so important to the college experience. This bill seeks to leverage technology that serves as an ADT System (home monitoring) for guns only by conducting an evaluation of existing technology. Law enforcement in Prince George's has provided samples of different types of firearms that have been used to train AI systems to automatically detect firearms during public events and to alert law enforcement. This technology taps into the video feed real-time and provides alerts when there is a "hit" on a firearm. This is currently being used by the Orioles and our County School Systems, Colleges and Universities could also benefit from this technology.

COMMENTS, MODIFICATIONS, SUPPORT?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

7. Fentanyl. State Senator Bill Folden will be sponsoring this bill with multiple co-sponsors. Fentanyl is sweeping the nation, including Maryland. It is being added to many drug concoctions these days and can easily kill those who ingest it. Fentanyl-related deaths are legion. Maryland's Criminal Law Article currently prohibits a person from knowingly distributing fentanyl or possessing fentanyl with the intent to distribute it. A violator is guilty of a felony and is subject to imprisonment for up to 10 years. Last year's SB 464 would have increased the maximum jail penalty to 20 years. Passage of SB 464 this year would send a clear signal that Maryland intends to get very tough on people who fool around with fentanyl. A bill along these lines will be re-introduced by State Senator Bill Folden.

COMMENTS, MODIFICATIONS, SUPPORT?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

B. Juvenile Crime. Two years ago, significant juvenile crime reform legislation was passed (Chapter 42, 2022 Maryland Laws). In the meantime, certain juvenile crimes have exploded, particularly carjackings, handgun offenses and auto thefts. This situation cannot be ignored.

8. Juvenile Justice Reforms (LR1126). State Senator Ron Watson will be sponsoring this bill with Senators Chris West and Mary Beth Carozza co-sponsoring. The juvenile crime reform package did not anticipate the rise in violent crimes committed by juveniles carrying firearms. With 20-20 hindsight, several of the measures contained in the reform package went too far. This bill includes four provisions which pull back slightly from the reforms: (a) if a juvenile commits a felony or another crime involving a firearm, the case will go to the State's Attorney, who will then decide how the case will be handled; (b) it lengthens the period for which a juvenile guilty of a misdemeanor can be placed on probation from six months to 2 years and provides that probation extensions in such cases can last up to 3 years; (c) it lengthens the period for which a juvenile guilty of a felony, OR A CRIME INVOLVING A FIREARM can be placed on probation from 1 years to 5 years; (d) it treats offenses involving firearms, for probation purposes, as if they were felonies.

COMMENTS, MODIFICATIONS, SUPPORT?

- Mandate they be kept for 24 hours and make it mandatory that they see a judge and not just a commissioner and DJS
- Also, take into account the record of the juvenile in VA and DC (Police Chief comments)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

9. Parental Accountability (LR1134). State Senator Ron Watson will be sponsoring this bill with Senators Chris West and Mary Beth Carozza co-sponsoring. In Maryland, a Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) is a legal term used to describe a child who is believed to be at risk of abuse, neglect, or other forms of harm, and as a result, the state may intervene to provide protection and support for that child.

This bill seeks to hold parents accountable for activities that contribute to the neglect of a child and mandate the child AND parents participate in appropriate services. Kids under 13 years old are not subject to the juvenile court system, police and prosecutors are finding that criminal gangs are using kids under 13 to engage in criminal activity on behalf of the gangs because if the kids are caught, they are just reprimanded and sent home. Within hours, they are back on the streets engaging in criminal activity once again. This bill amends the law to provide that in the case of a kid under 13 years old:

ON THE FIRST ARREST FOR AN OFFENSE INVOLVING THE USE AND POSSESSION OF A FIREARM, OR ON THE SECOND ARREST FOR ANY OTHER OFFENSE, A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER SHALL MAKE A REPORT OT THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES FOR PURPOSES OF A NEGLECT INVESTIGATION AS PROVIDED BY LAW.

The bill requires both the parents and child to complete all aspects of any plan prescribed by Department of Social Services (DSS), which may include services such as counseling, parenting classes, substance abuse treatment and supervised visitation in the case of a child who is removed from the home. A parent who fails to complete any services prescribed by DSS must appear in court and may be subjected to the imposition of a court order regarding the completion of any such services. Any violation of the court order may subject the parents to possible contempt of court and fines.

COMMENTS, MODIFICATIONS, SUPPORT?

This also allows the state to take a more reformative and less punitive approach in dealing with juveniles displaying concerning behaviors. This bill will require DJS to provide an annual report of juveniles that have committed firearm offenses during the intake process after they have been referred by law enforcement.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

COMMENTS, MODIFICATIONS, SUPPORT?

-
- This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

C. Amendments to the Juvenile Interrogation Act. The “Juvenile Interrogation Act” (Chapter 50, 2022 Maryland Laws) is the subject of great controversy. Police and States Attorneys say that it ties their hands in terms of interrogating juveniles in order to solve crimes. Public defenders say that it protects vulnerable kids and only applies when juveniles are “in custody”. Police and States Attorneys say that the term “in custody” is vague enough that the public defenders can argue that some juveniles believe that any time a law enforcement officer stops a juvenile and begins to question him, the juvenile is “in custody”. The JIA has two principal parts: (1) it states that whenever a juvenile is interrogated by police, the juvenile has to be read his Miranda rights, using any age-appropriate language as directed by the Maryland Supreme Court; and (2) unlike adults, who can waive their right to remain silent or talk to a lawyer, the bill states that no juvenile who has been taken “in custody” by a police officer, including a school resource officer, can be interrogated before the juvenile has actually talked to an attorney. The following three bills represent suggested compromises:

13. Juvenile Law – Custodial Interrogation – Parental Consultation (LR1136). State Senator Ron Watson will be sponsoring this bill with Senators Chris West and Mary Beth Carozza co-sponsoring. The Supreme Court’s Miranda decision requires that every person taken into custody by law enforcement must be read the person’s rights to remain silent and to talk to an attorney at any time before law enforcement interrogates the person. This rule applies equally to children and adults. It cannot be curtailed by State law. Two years ago, the Maryland General Assembly enacted the Juvenile Interrogation Act, which provided that all juveniles MUST speak to an attorney after being taken into custody and before they are questioned by law enforcement. Because the question of when a juvenile is in custody has been held to be a subjective decision determined by when the juvenile “thought” he could not leave, most law enforcement officers are refraining from asking juveniles any questions about a crime until they have spoken to an attorney, and the simple fact is that most attorneys in such situations instruct the juvenile client to refrain from talking to law enforcement. This, according to law enforcement, has been an impediment. Under this bill, a parent of a juvenile will have the power to waive the requirement in the Juvenile Interrogation Act that the child MUST consult with an attorney before speaking to law enforcement. **This seeks to re-insert parents back into the equation by the requirement of consultation with an attorney OR A PARENT, GUARDIAN, OR CUSTODIAN.** Once the parent waives the requirement, the child can always still decline to speak to law enforcement and can still insist that he/she wants to speak to an attorney. If the parent waives the requirement, the bill will provide that law enforcement should afford the child and parent a chance to talk (by phone or in person). The law will not require the parent to be present when the child talks to law enforcement.

COMMENTS, MODIFICATIONS, SUPPORT?

COMMENTS, MODIFICATIONS, SUPPORT?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

15. Social Services for Juvenile Offenders. State Senator Chris West will be sponsoring this bill, with State Senators Ron Watson and Mary Beth Carozza as co-sponsors. Information suggests that the Department of Juvenile Justice does not have sufficient funding to adequately provide needed supervision and social services for the State's juvenile offenders. This is unacceptable. The underlying premise of the juvenile crime reform legislation that the General Assembly passed two years ago was that data demonstrates that the incarceration of juveniles is counterproductive and that the preferred, data-proven approach is that one in which wayward juveniles are provided with effective supervision and social services. Much of the juvenile crime reform legislation thus assumed that the State would be capable of providing such effective supervision and social services to its juveniles. If these essential social services and adequate supervision are not being provided, it means that youthful offenders are not being held accountable for their crimes and are not being rehabilitated.

This bill will do two things: (a) Considerably beef up the existing monitoring of juvenile incarceration facilities and expand the mission of the monitoring team to include effective monitoring of the supervisory and social services program for juvenile offenders. The head of the monitoring program will be elevated to a gubernatorial appointment, subject to confirmation by the State Senate. The periodic reports of the monitors will be provided to each member of the General Assembly. Regular monitoring of juveniles who are receiving supervision and/or social services will be required in order to ensure that the needed supervision and social services are being effectively provided. (b) Establish a summer study of the current ability of the Department of Juvenile Services to provide effective social services to juvenile offenders. Members of the commission will include the Secretary of the Department of Juvenile Services or his nominee, a State Senator appointed by the Chair of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, a State Delegate appointed by the Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, representatives of the States Attorneys, the public defenders, the State police chiefs and the Office of the Attorney General. The study commission will be charged with recommending reforms along with the necessary funding levels to sustain them.

COMMENTS, MODIFICATIONS, SUPPORT?

-State Police cannot address the issues that county/municipal police chiefs deal with adequately. The Commission should include: (1) the County Chiefs or Dept Rep of the 5 largest county police agencies in MD. Name them specifically like Baltimore, Balt City, Montgomery Co and Prince George's Co which have proven to have the biggest volume of issues. (2) Add the Presidents of the MD Chief and MD Sheriffs Assoc. (Police Chief)

COMMENTS, MODIFICATIONS, SUPPORT?

- Also Failure to Leave Identification to stop a hit and run.

-Mandatory arrest and processing, no citations. AND stop citations for drunk driving, jail processing should be required. (PGPD)

D. Policing Reforms

17. A study of police understaffing State Senator Chris West will be sponsoring this bill. Most of Maryland's police departments are short-staffed, resulting in fewer "feet on the street" to fight crime. The understaffing has gotten worse in the last few years despite resourceful efforts to increase the successful recruiting of new officers. Last year, SB 18, as amended, was a bipartisan bill which passed on the floor of the State Senate 47-0. Both SB 18 and the House cross-filed bill died without action in the House Appropriations Committee. These bills would have set up the Police Retention Workgroup to study issues and factors potentially contributing to the decline in police officer recruitment and retention statewide. Certainly, the high vacancy rate in police department staffing is contributing to the severity of crime in Maryland, so a well-conceived study to get to the bottom of this problem would be a good first step in the State's efforts to fight crime. A bill along these lines should be introduced with bipartisan sponsors in 2024, preferably as a part of the Governor's anti-crime initiative.

COMMENTS, MODIFICATIONS, SUPPORT?

-We already know why the ranks are reduced across the nation: defund the police movements, low pay, no incentives like tuition reimbursement, loan forgiveness, housing incentives, state tax incentives, child care, etc.

- Early retirement systems that allow officers to exit at 20, 22, 25 years of service. A minimum retirement years of service and age needs to be set across the state. (Police Chief)