

SHANEKA HENSON
Legislative District 30A
Anne Arundel County

Ways and Means Committee

Joint Committee on
Children, Youth, and Families



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Dear District 30A Friends and Neighbors,

I am honored to serve as your Delegate in the Maryland General Assembly, representing Annapolis, and parts of Arnold, Broadneck, Edgewater and Londontown. As a lifelong resident born and raised in Annapolis, fighting for the well-being and prosperity of my neighbors holds profound personal significance to me. This session, more than ever, has been about **extending a helping hand to those who need it most**. From championing young people's mental health to advocating for pregnant and parenting students, and safeguarding our children online, each action I've taken was driven by my heartfelt desire to extend a helping hand and uplift our community.

This session, **I sponsored 8 bills and co-sponsored an additional 44**. Each of these were aimed at lending a helping hand to each and every citizen in the great State of Maryland. This session marked significant victories, starting with the passage of the **Cameron Carden Act of 2024 (HB0539)** in both chambers. After a relentless two-year fight, this crucial legislation ensures fair treatment and support for college/university students withdrawing due to mental health crises. This legislation ensures that students will be able to withdraw and receive a refund for money spent on tuition and fees for that semester. I'm especially grateful to Senator Anthony Muse for his invaluable support in getting this bill through the Senate.

I wrote an opinion piece in the Capital Gazette titled "Legislation Offers Help to Pregnant, Parenting Students," drawing from my own experiences as a former teenage mom and college student. In light of this, I was honored to sponsor the **Pregnant & Parenting Students Support Act (HB0771)**. This legislation not only provides vital support to pregnant and parenting students, but also addresses their needs for resources such as childcare and nutrition. Despite passing unanimously in the House, the legislation did not receive a vote in the Senate, meaning it won't become law this year. However, I am committed to refileing it in the future to continue advocating for pregnant and parenting students in Maryland. This bill garnered support from esteemed organizations throughout Maryland.

I am steadfastly committed to shielding our children from the detrimental effects of exposure to explicit content. This session I sponsored the **Maryland Online Child Protection Act (HB0772)** which sought to mandate default filters on cell phones, tablets, and gaming devices to shield minors from accessing harmful material online. This critical legislation garnered support from influential organizations such as the National Center on Sexual Exploitation, Maryland Coalition Against Pornography, and Women of Color For Equal Justice, among others. The bill had impactful hearings in the House and Senate, in which survivors shared experiences about the harms of children accessing obscene materials online. Regrettably, despite these efforts, time constraints prevented a vote on this crucial legislation. As we press forward, my dedication remains unwavering in our mission to protect Maryland's youth. I am resolved to

reintroduce the Maryland Online Child Protection Act and persist in our endeavors to safeguard the well-being of Maryland's children.

Working with the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture this year has been a joy. We were able to pass into law a name change to the **Banneker Douglass Museum. HB 390 pays homage to Maryland's freedom fighter, Harriet Tubman**, by adding her name to the museum's title, which will now be called the Banneker Douglass Tubman Museum. This bill enriches the museum's historical significance and further preserves our state's heritage.

I'm proud to have championed and introduced a bill that will increase Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for our seniors. This effort resulted in a \$10.00 increase in the minimum monthly SNAP benefit for persons age 65 and older. I hope this modest increase will spur future actions to uplift Maryland seniors. I also sponsored **Anne Arundel County - Student Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Educators - Established (HB0541)**, which serves to assist Anne Arundel County educators with repayment of their student loans. This legislation will help us recruit some of the best teachers for our children.

Serving on the **Ways and Means Committee** provided me with a unique opportunity to weigh in on important bills that affect our children and families across Maryland, particularly in the areas of education, childcare, election law, and taxes. This year, our committee deliberated on high-profile bills that significantly influence our educational system and have substantial implications for our revenue and taxes. Throughout this process, every vote I cast was guided by your needs and priorities. I made these decisions with steadfast commitment to advocating for families and ensuring a bright future for our children.

Apart from my committee assignment, I worked with colleagues to address your public safety concerns and enhance our juvenile justice reforms. However, the final version of HB814, while aiming to improve juvenile justice, raises concerns about its potential disproportionate impact on Black youth and its departure from evidence-based practices. The bill extends the jurisdiction of the juvenile court to encompass 10- to 12-year-olds, despite data indicating that juveniles in this age group contribute minimally to overall juvenile crime rates. DJS statistics reveal that less than 3.5% of combined intake charges for serious offenses involve youth under 13. Moreover, Black youth are significantly overrepresented in DJS intake complaint decisions, comprising 64% of cases in fiscal 2023, despite accounting for only 30% of the population in this age group. This disparity underscores the need for a more nuanced and targeted approach to juvenile justice.

Amidst our legislative efforts, we cannot overlook the recent tragedy involving the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore. This devastating event has claimed lives and brought significant disruption to our region's economy. In response to this tragedy, I have been working with my colleagues to ensure that adequate support and resources are provided to those impacted by the collapse.

As we move forward, I remain steadfast in my dedication to providing a helping hand to all Marylanders. Together, we are paving the way for a safer and more supportive environment for all Marylanders to thrive.

With Respect and Deep Appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SHANeka HENSON', written over a faint, illegible background.

Delegate Shaneka Henson

2024 GENERAL ASSEMBLY LEGISLATION OVERVIEW

I am pleased to share with you an overview of the legislation passed this session of the General Assembly. These measures will have a direct impact on our community and the state.

ECONOMICS

▶ **DELEGATE HENSON CO-SPONSORED HB580 The Time to Serve Act of 2024**

HB 580 boosts support for State employees volunteering for disaster relief and military service. It doubles the maximum paid disaster service leave from 15 to 30 days annually with appointing authority approval. Additionally, it doubles the maximum paid leave for uniformed services training or reserve duty from 15 to 30 days, administered by the Secretary of Budget and Management.

HB649 Labor and Employment - Equal Pay for Equal Work - Wage Range Transparency

HB 649 aims to promote pay transparency by requiring employers to disclose wage ranges and benefits in job postings starting October 1, 2024. Employers must provide this information to applicants before discussing compensation and upon request. The bill prohibits retaliation against employees or applicants who exercise their rights under this act and allows them to bring legal action for violations, with penalties of up to \$10,000 plus reasonable attorney's fees.

HB1070 Maryland Transportation Authority - Tolls - Collection and Use (Maryland Toll Rate Reform Act of 2024)

HB 1070 will require the Maryland Transportation Authority to set toll rates near the revenue-maximizing level starting October 1, 2024. While this may lead to higher tolls, the increased revenue will fund transportation projects statewide and near the tolled facilities. The Authority will be able to offer discounts for daily commuters and Maryland E-ZPass account holders.

HB 262 Consumer Protection - Consumer Reporting Agencies - Information in Consumer Credit Reports

HB 262 aims to protect consumers by limiting the negative information that can be included in credit reports. The bill raises the dollar amounts for exemptions, so credit reporting agencies can't include certain older negative information as often. This means your credit report will have less old negative data, unless it's for a very large loan, expensive life insurance policy, or a high-paying job.

SB1 Electricity and Gas - Retail Supply - Regulation and Consumer Protection

SB1 updates Maryland's quarter-century-old rules governing the competitive marketplace for retail electricity. The bill will protect energy customers, particularly those in low-income neighborhoods, from predatory third-party retail energy suppliers who sell low and bill high, saving ratepayers an estimated \$150-\$200 million a year on electricity and an estimated \$50 million a year on natural gas.

EDUCATION

▶ **DELEGATE HENSON SPONSORED-HB539 Public Institutions of Higher Education – Student Withdrawal Policy – Reimbursement of Tuition and Fees (Cameron Carden Act of 2024)**

I sponsored HB 539, which requires each public institution of higher education to adopt a policy allowing students to withdraw due to extenuating circumstances such as illness, injury, hospitalization, and mental health issues. The policy must include a provision to refund tuition and fees for the semester in which the student withdraws if the extenuating circumstances inhibit their ability to continue their education. This bill aims to support students facing unexpected challenges that impact their academic progress.

▶ **DELEGATE HENSON SPONSORED HB541 Anne Arundel County – Student Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Educators – Established**

HB 541 permits Anne Arundel County to create a Student Loan Assistance Repayment Program for its public school educators. The program seeks to attract and retain diverse educators by offering assistance to those who commit to at least 5 years of service and meet specific criteria. Funding will be allocated annually in the county budget, and administration will be handled by the Anne Arundel County Public School System.

HB4 Institutions of Higher Education – Admissions Standards – Prohibition on Consideration of Legacy Preference or Donor Preference

HB4 bans the consideration of a student’s legacy status during the admissions process at Maryland’s public higher education institutions. In the wake of the recent Supreme Court ruling ending the consideration of race in the admissions process, the bill ensures fair access to traditionally underserved students and ensures that Maryland campuses are socially, economically, and racially diverse.

HB678 (Harris) Public Higher Education - Communities of Interest – Targeted Recruitment and Outreach Efforts

HB678 responds to the Supreme Court’s decision last summer eliminating affirmative action in college admissions. The bill will ensure that Maryland colleges and universities are committed to diversity and inclusion and that students from disadvantaged backgrounds can access higher education. By defining “communities of interest,” HB678 takes the first steps to improve enrollment at institutions with a historic underrepresentation of these communities in their enrollment, encompassing underrepresented groups, demographics, and/ or geographic areas.

HB785 Freedom to Read Act

HB 785, the Freedom to Read Act, establishes policies to protect intellectual freedom and access to information in public and school libraries. It prohibits the removal of library materials due to partisan or ideological disapproval and ties state funding to compliance with these standards.

HB1426 Education - Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Alterations

HB 1426 makes several changes to the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the state's comprehensive education reform plan. The bill addresses issues such as the expansion of Judy Centers and Family Support Centers, the timeline for independent evaluations of the Blueprint's progress, and adjustments to career ladder requirements for teachers and administrators. It also alters some funding and reporting deadlines and makes other technical changes to ensure the smooth implementation of the Blueprint's initiatives.

▶ DELEGATE HENSON CO-SPONSORED HB1441 Early Childhood Education – Publicly Funded Prekindergarten Programs – Alterations

HB 1441 makes changes to Maryland's public prekindergarten programs. It creates a career ladder for educators working in private prekindergarten, setting requirements for their qualifications. The bill also tells the Maryland State Department of Education to set up "prekindergarten provider hubs" to help teachers, childcare centers, and family child care homes work together better. Additionally, it adjusts the timing of funding for some child care grant and credential programs to match the prekindergarten program schedules. Overall, these changes aim to improve Maryland's mixed delivery prekindergarten system, which includes both public and private providers.

HB945 Education – Initial Teacher Certification – Requirements

HB945 creates additional pathways for those choosing to enter the teaching profession. By establishing new pathways to teacher certification, the bill will address record shortages and the insufficient pipeline of educators and help to diversify the profession to meet the Blueprint’s goals for a highly qualified and diverse workforce.

HB367 Community Colleges – Contraception – Access Requirements

HB367 requires community colleges to provide over-the-counter contraception to students on campus. The bill empowers the Maryland Department of Health to help community colleges provide the medication and to organize access on campus for students, whether through a student health center, retail stores on campus, vending machines, or other means that work best for each individual college.

ENVIRONMENT

HB1 Maryland Paint Stewardship

HB 1 establishes a program in Maryland to manage leftover paint. Paint companies must submit a plan to collect, transport, and recycle unused paint, funded by a small fee added to paint prices. Starting January 2026, only companies with approved plans can sell paint in Maryland, aiming to reduce leftover paint and promote environmental protection.

HB233 Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area Protection Program – Climate, Equity, and Administrative Provisions

HB 233 updates Maryland's Critical Area Protection Program to better address climate change, equity, and administrative processes. The bill requires local critical area programs to identify vulnerable areas, incorporate measures to mitigate and adapt to climate impacts, and enhance the resiliency of natural resources. It also aims to ensure the equitable distribution of benefits and burdens of development and conservation within the critical area. Additionally, the bill streamlines the review process for local program updates and establishes clearer standards for granting variances and zoning map amendments.

HB449 Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program - Funding for Underserved and Overburdened Communities

HB 449 establishes a flood management grant program with annual funding of \$20 million starting in fiscal 2026, directing at least 40% of funding to underserved or overburdened communities. It requires the Governor to include this funding in the annual state budget and increase administrative costs for program management.

HB1101 Clean Water Justice Act of 2024

In 2023, the Supreme Court decided *Sackett v. EPA*, which cut several streams and wetlands from being protected by the Clean Water Act. HB1101 restores citizens' ability to sue to protect those waterways, which is crucial to helping communities fight water pollution and state agencies enforce these laws.

HB1296 Electricity - Offshore Wind Projects - Alterations

HB1296 seeks to ensure that Maryland can meet its offshore wind goals by allowing remaining offshore wind projects to modify project size, pricing, and schedule in light of recent market changes. Absent legislation, Maryland faces the potential of losing 900 megawatts (MW) of offshore wind capacity out of the initial 2,000 MW awarded, resulting in the state's inability to meet its 8,500 MW goal by 2031.

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

HB603 Consumer Protection – Online Products and Services – Data of Children (Maryland Kids Code)

This law mandates companies offering online products for children to assess how they handle kids' personal data, setting rules to protect children's privacy and prohibiting harmful practices. Violations may result in fines, with oversight by the Attorney General's office. Though it may affect small businesses, larger corporations are primarily targeted.

HEALTHCARE

HB23 Maryland Health Benefit Exchange – Qualified Health Plans – Dental Coverage

HB 23 makes changes to ensure that all qualified health plans offered through the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange include essential pediatric dental benefits. The bill removes exceptions that allowed some qualified health plans to not provide these dental benefits for children. It also removes the Exchange's ability to require children to have certain dental benefits when enrolling in a qualified health plan. The goal is to make sure all children enrolled in qualified health plans have access to comprehensive dental coverage.

HB238 Public Health - Clean Indoor Air Act - Revisions

House Bill 238 expands the Clean Indoor Air Act to include vaping, prohibiting smoking and vaping in public indoor areas and certain mass transit systems. It requires "No Smoking or Vaping" signs to be prominently displayed

and updates related definitions and enforcement provisions. The bill aims to protect public health by reducing exposure to secondhand smoke and simplifying smoke-free regulations.

HB76 Health Occupations - Pharmacists - Administration of Vaccines

HB 76 Authorize a pharmacist to order and administer certain vaccinations to individuals in certain age groups if certain requirements are met; altering the vaccinations that a pharmacist can administer to individuals at least 3 years old; and altering the circumstances under which a pharmacist may administer certain vaccinations.

SB975 Maryland Department of Health – Reproductive Health Care Clinic Security Grant Program – Establishment (Supporting Reproductive Health Care Clinics Act)

SB975 responds to the increasing threats of violence to abortion providers. The bill provides grants for abortion and reproductive health clinics to increase security measures with the addition of security alarms and cameras, perimeter lighting, and like measures.

HB1143 Emergency Medical Services - Maryland Emergency Department Wait Time Reduction Commission – Establishment

HB1143 establishes the Maryland Emergency Department Wait Time Reduction Commission in the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems to review emergency room wait times in Maryland and develop strategies to improve them. The Commission will determine best practices and work on development and implementation of standardized protocols and operational efficiencies in hospital emergency departments.

HOUSING & REAL PROPERTY

▶ DELEGATE HENSON CO- SPONSORED HB287 Property Tax – Renters' Property Tax Relief Program – Assets Calculation

HB 287 adjusts Maryland's Renters' Property Tax Relief Program by excluding the cash value of retirement savings plans and individual retirement accounts from the asset calculation. This tweak expands eligibility for the program, enabling more renters to qualify for up to a \$1,000 property tax credit.

▶ DELEGATE HENSON CO- SPONSORED HB538 Land Use – Affordable Housing – Zoning Density and Permitting (Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024)

HB 538 Maryland mandates local jurisdictions to allow specific densities and uses for affordable housing developments, known as "qualified projects," which must include a percentage of affordable dwelling units and be deed-restricted for long-term affordability. It permits increased density and mixed-use developments in certain zoning areas, facilitating the construction of middle housing units like duplexes and townhouses. Additionally, it streamlines the approval process for these projects, reducing barriers and expediting their development to address the pressing need for affordable housing in the state.

HB1117 Landlord and Tenant - Failure to Repair Serious and Dangerous Defects - Tenant Remedies (Tenant Safety Act of 2024)

The Tenant Safety Act of 2024 mandates landlords to ensure rented dwellings are habitable, with remedies for breaches of this warranty. It allows multiple tenants to sue jointly if serious defects are not repaired, enhancing tenant protections.

▶ DELEGATE HENSON CO-SPONSORED HB693 Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024

HB693 protects renters from certain evictions and gives renters the opportunity to purchase a rental property if the property owner decides to sell it, i.e., the "Right of First Refusal." The bill also establishes an Office of Tenant Rights to communicate with and advocate for renters and provide them information on how to best exercise their rights. To discourage serial eviction filing, HB693 raises the eviction filing fee in Maryland from \$8 to \$43 and bars evictions during times of extreme weather conditions and other public health emergencies. The bill extends, from four days to seven days, the minimum time period between the granting of a judgement of possession in favor of the landlord and the issuance of an execution of a warrant of restitution against the tenant.

PUBLIC SAFETY

▶ **DELEGATE HENSON CO-SPONSORED HB404 Law Enforcement – Wellness Checks – Requirements (Gabriel's Law)**

HB 404 requires law enforcement agencies and fire, rescue, or emergency medical services entities to promptly conduct wellness checks when they receive a credible request from a concerned party about a life-threatening situation, regardless of the location of the individual or the requesting party. If the individual is outside their jurisdiction, they must immediately request the relevant agency to conduct the check without unreasonable delay.

▶ **DELEGATE HENSON CO-SPONSORED HB597 Growing Apprenticeships and the Public Safety Workforce (GAPS) Act**

HB 597 transforms the Law Enforcement Cadet Apprenticeship Program into the Public Safety Apprenticeship Program, expanding its reach to include various public safety roles. It raises grant limits, adjusts agency qualifications, mandates mental health policies for law enforcement and corrections, and forms a workgroup to boost employment in these sectors.

▶ **DELEGATE HENSON CO-SPONSORED HB1307 Task Force on the Creation of a Division of Returning Citizens and Expanded Reentry Services - Establishment**

House Bill 1037 creates a Task Force to improve reentry services for individuals leaving incarceration. It will assess current services, identify gaps, and submit recommendations to the General Assembly by December 31, 2025. The bill expects minimal expenses and has no significant impact on local government or small businesses.

▶ **DELEGATE HENSON CO-SPONSORED HB538 Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention - Establishment**

This bill establishes the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention within the Maryland Department of Health. The purpose of this center is to reduce firearm violence by partnering with various agencies and communities to implement public health strategies. It involves consultation with stakeholders, collecting recommendations, and submitting plans to the Governor and General Assembly. The bill allocates funds for the center's operations and grants to support its initiatives, aiming to address gun violence as a public health crisis.

HB814 Juvenile Law – Reform

HB 814 makes several significant changes to Maryland's juvenile justice system; the bill extends juvenile court jurisdiction to include 4th and 5th graders for specific offenses. However, data from the Maryland Office of the Public Defender and insights from the Juvenile Justice Reform Council warn against its potential drawbacks. These include overcharging, disproportionate impacts on marginalized communities, and the risk of increasing rather than reducing recidivism rates among young offenders.

HB947 Civil Actions - Public Nuisances - Firearm Industry Members (Gun Industry Accountability Act of 2024)

The bill establishes that any “firearm industry member”, a person engaged in the sale, manufacture, distribution, importation, or marketing of firearm products, may not create, maintain, or contribute to harm the public through the sale, manufacture, distribution, importation, or marketing of any firearm-related products. A firearm industry member who violates the Act creates a public nuisance and the Attorney General, county attorney, or Baltimore City Solicitor may sue the firearm industry member and seek appropriate relief.

VETERANS

▶ **DELEGATE HENSON CO-SPONSORED HB431 Department of Veterans Affairs – Renaming and Deputy Secretary of Military Family Policy and Programs**

HB 431 renames the Department of Veterans Affairs to the Department of Veterans and Military Families and its Secretary to the Secretary of Veterans and Military Families. It mandates the appointment of a Deputy Secretary of Military Family Policy and Programs. The bill ensures a smooth transition, maintaining continuity of personnel, records, and other matters.

FY 25 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The FY25 Budget package reflects Maryland's commitment to addressing fiscal challenges and investing in education, transportation, trauma services, childcare, health care, public safety, climate action, and economic recovery. Notably, it supports the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, stabilizes transportation funding, increases support for trauma services, allocates significant funding to childcare scholarships, enhances Medicaid funding, and invests in climate pollution reduction efforts. Additionally, the FY25 Capital Budget allocates substantial funds for school construction, housing and community development, environmental programs, and higher education institutions, aiming to create and maintain jobs while leveraging local and private investments.

Annapolis		Anne Arundel County	
Annapolis City Dock Stormwater and Flood Mitigation (Phase 2)	\$3,000,000	Luminis Health Anne Arundel Medical Center Inc - Pediatric Emergency Department Upgrade	\$1,400,000
Annapolis City Dock Power Pedestal Upgrades	\$250,000	827 Mayo Road Limited Partnership Well Installation	\$45,000
Fourth Street Public Boating Access Improvements	\$175,000	Thermal Processing Demonstration Facility	\$10,000,000
Shipwright Street End Public Boating Access Improvements	\$175,000	Parker Drive Community Septic-to-Sewer Conversion	\$492,106
Brice House, Paca House, and other State-owned historic properties	\$3,100,000	Sandy Point State Park - Water Tower and Water Treatment Plant Upgrade	\$2,281,000
Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts - Infrastructure Modernization	\$1,100,000	Anne Arundel Community College - Dragun Building Renovation	\$759,000
William Paca House and Garden Capital Repairs	\$100,000	Anne Arundel Community College - Florestano Building Renovation	\$6,515,000
Annapolis Skate Park at Truxton Park	\$50,000	Broadwater Creek Dredging	\$457,000
DGS: Community Place - Automated Doors and Restroom Upgrades	\$1,240,000	Broadwater Creek Site One Structures Beneficial Use Dredged Material Placement	\$450,000
DGS: Historic State House - Restroom Upgrades	\$1,380,000	Carr Creek Dredging	\$200,000
Choice Neighborhood Initiative Affordable Housing	\$1,000,000	Parker Creek Dredging	\$277,500
Lighthouse Bistro-Culinary Arts	\$75,000	New Multicultural Center (APCE)	\$5,000,000
Annapolis Maritime Museum Pavilion	\$42,500	Parole Communications Tower	\$1,000,000
History of Annapolis Five-Road Marker	\$20,000	Arundel Lodge BHA Services	\$1,000,000
Wiley H. Bates Legacy Center	\$25,000	Annapolis Middle School Field Lights	\$500,000