



# News Release

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## County Executive Unveils Legislative Priorities

*Virtual Town Hall Slated for October 13<sup>th</sup>*

FREDERICK, Md. – Frederick County Executive Jan Gardner announced her legislative priorities for the upcoming session of the Maryland General Assembly. She will request four pieces of legislation, including measures to protect seniors and forested land. The public will have an opportunity to suggest additional bills or comment on proposals during a virtual public hearing on Oct. 13, beginning at 6 p.m.

“Public input is essential to providing good government,” Executive Gardner said. “Frederick County is unique among charter governments with our process, which ensures everyone has an opportunity to weigh in on our legislative package.”

Executive Gardner’s first bill, *Forest Conservation – Forest Conservation Fee*, would keep the state’s long-standing forest banking program in place until 2024 so that existing forested land can continue to be preserved. Last year, the program was effectively halted while a review is conducted. Forest banking has preserved more than 2,500 acres of forest in Frederick County. Up to 80 property owners who began the process to preserve environmentally sensitive areas in Frederick County are currently unable to finalize their plans because of last year’s changes. The proposed bill would also extend the timeline by which local governments can use deposited money in the Forest Conservation Fund.

The second proposed piece of legislation, *Tax – Property – Third Party Tax Bill Notification*, would protect the most vulnerable homeowners from the potential loss of their homes. The bill allows seniors and individuals with physical or developmental disabilities to designate a third-party adult to receive copies of their property tax bills and any notices of unpaid property taxes. This safeguard measure means a family member or trusted adult can provide reminders so a person does not forget to pay a bill.

Legislation has also been proposed to redirect a portion of the marriage ceremony fee to Heritage Frederick, which maintains marriage records for numerous places of worship. That bill is entitled *Frederick County – Disposition of Marriage Ceremony Fee*. The final proposal, *Abandoned Burial Lots – Termination of Ownership Rights*, would help cemeteries maintain contact with owners of burial lots. In cases where a lot has been abandoned for 50 or more years, ownership would return to the cemetery.

During her briefing, the Executive also outlined requests from the County Council and community organizations for items to include in the 2022 legislative package. The County Council supported a measure proposed by Council Member Steve McKay to change how vacancies are filled on the Board of Education. That draft legislation, along with all submitted requests, can be found on the County’s website at [www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/Legislative](http://www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/Legislative).

The public is invited to comment on any of the proposals, or suggest additional topics for consideration, during a virtual town hall meeting at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 13. The meeting will be televised live on FCG TV, cable channels 19/1085, and webcast at [FrederickCountyMD.gov/LegislativeTownHall](http://FrederickCountyMD.gov/LegislativeTownHall). For more information, contact Government Affairs Director Joy Schaefer at 301-600-1621 or via e-mail at [jschaefer@FrederickCountyMD.gov](mailto:jschaefer@FrederickCountyMD.gov).

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