



Volume 2021-2022

Issue 7

Feb/Mar 2022

## CALENDAR

### February

- 1-28 African American History Month
- 21 President's Day
- 22 LWVMD DEI Book Club - *Small Great Things*, by Jodi Picoult  
virtual, 4-5pm
- 23 Book Club - *Cloud Cuckoo Land*, by Anthony Doer  
virtual, 7:30pm

### March

- 2 Education Committee Meeting  
virtual, 10am
- 11 LWVBCo Speaker Series - *Preventing Gun Violence*, with Elizabeth Banach  
virtual, 11am
- 23 Book Club - *The Life of Kings: The Baltimore Sun and the Golden Age of the American Newspaper*, by James Thakara  
virtual, 7:30pm

### Baltimore County Executive's Budget Town Hall Meetings

*All meetings will be held from 6:30-8pm. Meetings will be held virtually unless COVID-19 metrics change. If they do, meetings will be held at the location indicated. For details, visit the County Executive's [Town Hall meetings webpage](#).*

- Feb 23 District 7, Sollers Point Multi-Purpose Center
- Mar 9 District 6, CCBC Essex Campus
- Mar 16 District 1, CCBC Catonsville
- Mar 30 District 4, Randallstown Community Center

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**LWV Baltimore County**  
Empowering residents  
through voter registration,  
education, and advocacy

## CO-PRESIDENTS' LETTER



LWVBCo Co-Presidents,  
Tana Hamilton (l) and  
Ericka McDonald (r).

Every February we celebrate African American History month. It's a month where we review names and stories of the African Americans who contributed or are contributing to America. African American history is American history, so we can recognize people from various specialties, such as those who contributed to healthcare or engineering. A recent blog post by the LWV highlighted Black women who defined or are defining the voting rights movement, a key issue for the League. The blog in its entirety can be found on page 3 of this newsletter.

Historically, the blog highlights Ida B. Wells, an early civil rights leader and journalist that led an antilynching crusade and fought for women's rights; and Fannie Lou Hamer, a Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

organizer who led voter registration movements across the country and co-founded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

The blog also notes the work of two women currently active in civil rights and voting rights. LaTosha Brown is the co-founder of Black Voters Matter who led movements to increase Black voter turnout in Alabama. Melanie Campbell is a mover and shaker for civil rights and women's rights who founded the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation. However, what I loved most is that the blog went on to mention African Americans that are making a difference for the League at the national level right now.

This got me thinking about who has made an impact on the rich history of our county, but details of significant figures in African American history in Baltimore County online are scant, though there are many documented for Baltimore City and Maryland. Are we to believe there were no significant African Americans that contributed to the development of Baltimore County?

When people only hear stories from one perspective, it neglects our rich Baltimore Countian history. The least dangerous result from this is bias in an understanding of how we came to be, and a far more dangerous outcome is a narrative that is nothing more than propaganda. So for this year of African American history, I encourage you to think about the contributions of African Americans in Baltimore County's history.

Who is making history now in Baltimore County? Baltimore County African American politicians include Senator Delores G. Kelley (D), Senator Charles E. Sydnor III (D), and Delegate Benjamin T. Brooks (D). African Americans working on civil issues include the Baltimore County NAACP former President Tony Fugett, current President Dr. Danita Tolson, and the Randallstown NAACP President Ryan Coleman. There are several Black members of our League who are making history including Linda Dorsey-Walker, who ran for office as a delegate representing the county and supported causes such as education, consumer rights, and transportation; and Leslie Grant, who testified to the legislature for expanded access to dental care for underserved and uninsured residents and ran in a special election for the 7th Congressional District seat.

Black history is Baltimore County history, and our strength lies in our rich landscape of experiences and backgrounds. As Baltimore County continues to grow in diversity, let's embrace the significant contributions by African Americans in Baltimore County, past and present. I've named a few to consider, but there are many stories that need to be shared. If you would like to share the names of African Americans who you think are making a difference in the county, post information about them on our [Facebook](#) page.

Sincerely,

Co-Presidents

Tana Hamilton

*Tana R Hamilton*

Ericka McDonald

*Ericka McDonald*

## LWVUS

### **BLACK WOMEN WHO DEFINE(D) THE VOTING RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

February is Black History Month, and as we reflect on the triumphs and history of African Americans, we want to acknowledge the role of Black women in the voting rights movement. From Ida B. Wells to Stacey Abrams, Black women have played a pivotal role in the advancement of voting rights. Although there have been obstacles along the way, Black women as a collective power are a force to be reckoned with. While Black women are not a monolith in any shape or form, they have and continue to use their voices to make progress on many issues, especially voting rights.

#### **Historical Icons**

The voting rights advocates of today stand on the shoulders of those who came before them. Born into slavery, Ida B. Wells was one of the early leaders of the civil rights movement. As a journalist, she led an antilynching crusade and fought for women's rights. She also fought tirelessly for the right to vote, all while facing discrimination within the suffragist movement. In 1913, Wells co-founded the [Alpha Suffrage Club](#), the first Black women's suffrage group in the state of Illinois. To this day, Wells is [honored](#) as an advocate for women's equality and racial equality.



*Ida B. Wells*



*Fannie Lou Hamer*

We can't talk about voting rights without mentioning Fannie Lou Hamer. Born in 1917, Hamer became a prominent voice in the civil rights and voting rights movements. As a Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organizer, Hamer led voter registration movements [across the country](#) and co-founded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964. In that year, Hamer helped organize [Freedom Summer](#), a mobilizing effort that brought college students together to help with Black voter registration in the South.

These are just two of the countless Black women who've influenced voting rights throughout our history.

#### **Present-Day Leaders**

Fast forward to the present-day, Black women have been a leading force in the voting rights movement. [LaTosha Brown](#), a co-founder of [Black Voters Matter](#), has been successful in mobilizing the people's power on voting rights issues and other social justice issues that impact the Black community. Brown led movements that have increased Black voter turnout in Alabama and ultimately played a significant role in the [2017 Alabama Senate race](#).



*LaTosha Brown*



*Melanie Campbell*

Founder of [National Coalition on Black Civic Participation](#), [Melanie Campbell](#), remains active in the civil rights and voting rights movements. Awarded the National Urban League's "Women of Power Award," Campbell has been successful in civic engagement and issue-based organizing teams for underserved communities.

At the League, our work is guided by the experience and creativity of women like our Chief Strategy Officer [Ayo Atterberry](#), Chief Counsel [Celina Stewart](#), and Board President [Dr. Deborah Ann Turner](#). Their impact on the League cannot be understated; we are who we are today because of them.

#### **Resources**

There are countless other Black women who have played an instrumental role in the voting rights movement. As we begin to celebrate Black History Month, we encourage you to learn about other nonpartisan voter advocacy groups that support voters in the Black community.

- [#BlackWomenVote](#)
- [Black Voters Matter](#)
- [Black Girls Vote](#)
- [NAACP Legal Defense Fund](#)
- [The Voting Rights Alliance](#)
- [National Coalition on Black Civic Participation](#)

For more information on voting resources, visit the League of Women Voters, [VOTE411.org](#) for a one-stop-shop of election information, including election dates, early voting options, and polling locations.

Who are your Black women voting rights heroes? Let us know on [Twitter](#)! We'd love to elevate their stories.

- [LWVUS 2/4/22 Blog Post](#)

## EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

### BOOK CLUB

There is plenty of room to join the book club since all meetings continue to be virtual. **All meetings start at 7:30pm.** If you'd like to attend, contact Betsy Sexton at [esexton2009@gmail.com](mailto:esexton2009@gmail.com) to receive the Zoom link.

- **Wednesday, February 23** - *Cloud Cuckoo Land*, by Anthony Doer
- **Wednesday, March 23** - *The Life of Kings: The Baltimore Sun and the Golden Age of the American Newspaper*, by James Thakara

- Betsy Sexton, Book Club Chair

### SPEAKER SERIES



*The League of Women Voters of Baltimore County invites you to an online event:*

#### **Preventing Gun Violence Friday, March 11, 11am**

Gun violence, a complex and multifaceted problem, is devastating families and communities across the country. Gun-violence prevention laws and interventions are effective at reducing this problem. Maryland's General Assembly, a national leader in gun violence prevention, is currently considering legislation that would keep guns out of the hands of children ("Jaelynn's Law"), ban ghost guns, and restrict guns at polling sites. Elizabeth Banach will discuss the status of these important bills, as well as federal legislation introduced a year ago that would require securing firearms at home to prevent children gaining access to them ("Ethan's Law").

**Elizabeth Banach** is the executive director of Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence. After the Sandy Hook school tragedy, Liz — a hunter's daughter — knew it was time to speak out for evidence-based solutions to gun violence. MPGVS works to strengthen gun violence prevention laws, support research on gun violence, and raise awareness of the problem. It focuses attention and resources on individuals disproportionately affected by gun violence: people who use a gun to commit suicide and young men and women of color living in urban areas.

You must register in advance for this meeting: <https://bit.ly/3tBeHzc>. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with details for joining the event. There will be a Q&A after the presentation. Submit questions in advance to: [events@lwvbaltimorecounty.org](mailto:events@lwvbaltimorecounty.org). This event is open to ALL.

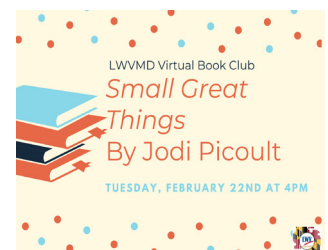
Didn't get a chance to hear our previous speakers? Visit our website and you can! We have posted videos of presentations dating back to September 2020 at [www.lwvbaltimorecounty.org/event\\_recordings](http://www.lwvbaltimorecounty.org/event_recordings).

- Sharyluciani, Events Committee Member

### LWVMD DEI Book Club

The DEI virtual book club gives participants the chance to discuss the book selection within the framework of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This month's book is:

***Small Great Things*, by Jodi Picoult  
Tuesday, February 22, from 4-5pm**



The book club is free and open to all. To join the conversation, register on the LWVMD webpage at [www.lwvmd.org/current\\_events](http://www.lwvmd.org/current_events). If you have questions, email Executive Director Nikki Tyree at [stateoffice@lwvmd.org](mailto:stateoffice@lwvmd.org).

- Nikki Tyree, LWVMD Executive Director

## COMMITTEES AND REPORTS

### CANDIDATE FORUMS

The LWV Baltimore County Board will once again sponsor forums before this coming election cycle; currently the plan is to hold them virtually. Before the primary, we are considering holding Board of Elections forums in each councilmanic district as well as two State's Attorney forums and two County Executive forums, one for each party. Before the general election, we would like to hold a forum in each councilmanic district where there is a contested election; all candidates who have the right to be on the ballot in November will be included.



image by [mary1826](#) from [Pixabay](#)

In order to pull this off, we need a few good volunteers who are willing to help with the planning and implementation of the forums. Though virtual forums will not need the hands-on volunteers typically used for in-person forums, we still need help organizing the events so all goes smoothly.

What kind of help do we need? Publicity is really important to generate awareness of the forums, so we need volunteers to write press releases and put us in touch with contacts at the papers, radio stations, and/or TV stations. We would also like to have a representative at each of the retirement homes to publicize the forums to their residents. Volunteers are needed to track responses from the candidates. And, of course, we want to generate good questions for the candidates, so please make a list of the issues you are following and send it to the committee when we are up and running. The primary is only a few months away.

If you would like to help, please contact Neilson Andrews at 410-583-0155 or [nandrews115@lwbaltimorecounty.org](mailto:nandrews115@lwbaltimorecounty.org).

- Neilson Andrews, Forums Committee Chair

### LWVBCo COUNTY COUNCIL DISTRICT POSITION CHANGE



The LWV Baltimore County voted to change our position on the number of County Council seats at the February 3, 2022, board meeting. The League's existing position, approved in 1992 and 2002, was in favor of maintaining the current number of County Council seats (7). The co-presidents, in consultation with LWVUS and the membership, proposed and adopted the following position:

***“ACTION to support increasing the number of County Council Districts (2022).”***

Updating this position became important as we worked with other advocacy groups on the ACLU lawsuit in opposition to the racially gerrymandered Baltimore County redistricting plan. Advocates believe that creating additional council districts could lead to additional majority-minority districts and opportunities for those groups currently underrepresented on the council.

This issue is of great importance from a systemic inequality perspective and was in conflict with our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policy. Because this is an issue of fair representation and apportionment, it is covered by the LWVUS positions on voting rights. Other reasons to support the expansion of County Council seats included the following:

- Our council districts currently each represent around 122,000 people. By contrast, Howard County's districts represent about 60,000 each and Montgomery County has 7 districts representing about 150,000 people AND four at-large representatives.
- The Black population of Baltimore County is currently packed into a single district. Creating more districts could create more minority-majority districts and give Black residents equitable representation.
- Creation of more districts would create more opportunity for people not currently represented on the council - women, youth, LGBTQ+, and people of color.

Advocacy groups in Baltimore County are planning to collect signatures to place this issue on the ballot as a referendum. One of our members, Linda Dorsey Walker, is leading this effort and the League plans to join the steering committee. More information about how you can get involved will be forthcoming!

- Ericka McDonald, Co-President

## COMMITTEES AND REPORTS

### WE ARE LWV



League member  
Yara Cheikh

League member Yara Cheikh has advocated for the Baltimore County Public School System for fourteen years. Serving as PTA Presidents at all levels, she also serves on the LWV Baltimore County Education Committee. In fact, she was introduced to the League by former Education Committee Chair Judy Miller. Judy invited Yara to address the Committee on school construction issues in Baltimore County in 2007, the year Yara joined the League.

Yara now serves as the Education Committee's Chair, hoping to continue the League's important work. "The Committee was instrumental in advocating for a change to the all-appointed Board of Education for the Baltimore County Public Schools," says Yara. "In 2014, education advocates throughout Baltimore County partnered with the LWV Baltimore County and lobbied legislators to pass a bill which created the first hybrid school board in Baltimore County."

As Chair, her priorities include monitoring legislative proposals in Annapolis and Baltimore County affecting children and lobbying with other stakeholders in support of fully funded public schools.

The daughter of a Syrian immigrant, Yara's politically active father encouraged robust debate around their kitchen table, fostering a sense of duty to community and social justice. Her years at university further taught her to value democracy, and the League's focus on gerrymandering speaks to those concerns.

Yara also works to address food insecurity and support policies to help working families. She is following the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future in the Baltimore County schools and at the state level. "This is an extraordinary opportunity to reimagine how we meet the needs of our most vulnerable school populations and support and reinvigorate the teaching profession."

Yara Cheikh is the League. In her own words: "The League has provided me with the opportunity to meet extraordinary people from diverse backgrounds. Fortunately, I now count many League members as friends. I know that I am a more thoughtful human from listening to the experiences and opinions of my fellow League members. The professional manner in which the League operates and the mission to educate citizens on issues of extraordinary concern in our democracy continue to impress and inspire me."

- Gwen Wilson, Newsletter Committee Member



### EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING

The LWV Baltimore County's Education Committee will be meeting virtually via Google Meets on **Wednesday, March 2, at 10am.**



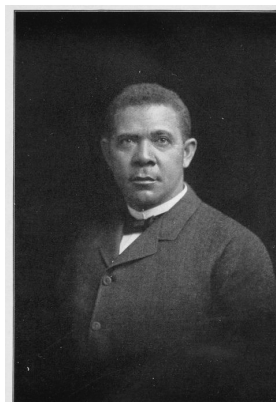
There are lots of things to discuss, such as the FY 2023 proposed school board budget and how to best advocate for the full and fair funding of the Blueprint for Maryland's future. Education Committee meetings are also a place where we can learn about and discuss important trends and change in the realm of education, such as the benefit of community schools.

These meetings are open to all League members, so if you are interested in advancing educational issues, please consider attending. The strength of our positions and our advocacy work comes from the commitment and involvement of our members. To join the meeting, go to [meet.google.com/thi-onuw-drg](https://meet.google.com/thi-onuw-drg), or call 657-226-0182 (PIN: 685892181). We hope to see you there.

- Yara Cheikh, Education Committee Chair

### New Members LWV Baltimore County Welcomes You!

- \* Kathryn Malone
- \* Keisha Walker
- \* Genevieve Hart
- \* Karen Blandford



BOOKER T. WASHINGTON.

from the [New York Public Library Digital Collections](#)

*"A lie doesn't become truth, wrong doesn't become right, and evil doesn't become good, just because it's accepted by a majority."*

- Booker T. Washington

## COMMITTEES AND REPORTS

### STUDENT SUPPORT NETWORK: SUMMER SNAP PROGRAM

**Great News!** Student Support Network Advocacy Committee Chair Tam Lynne Kelley and President Laurie Taylor-Mitchell have been working over the past few weeks to advocate for increased financial support for anti-hunger and anti-poverty programs. A “Road Map to End Hunger” in Baltimore County and in Maryland were distributed to local and state elected officials, education advocates, and the Governor to urge support for three effective programs that already exist, but are underfunded: Summer SNAP for Children, increasing the minimum monthly SNAP benefit, and the Maryland Meals for Achievement universal free school breakfast program. A copy of the roadmap can be viewed [here](#).

We are thrilled to report that on January 18, 2022, the Governor’s Office announced that \$4.8 million in additional funding will be provided for the Summer SNAP for Children program, which will assist over 50,000 children in low-income families state-wide. Thank you to State Senator Cory McCray and Delegate Pamela Queen, sponsors of the bill that created Summer SNAP for Children several years ago. We are grateful for their leadership and to all of those who advocated for this proven strategy to lower food insecurity and poverty for children in low income families.

#### What is Summer SNAP for Children?

- Maryland’s Summer SNAP for Children builds on the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which reduces food insecurity and poverty for 77,558 Baltimore County households.
- Summer SNAP for Children helps families access food during school breaks by providing a state and county funded supplement of \$30 per child, per summer month that is automatically added to existing SNAP accounts.
- There are 51,627 children eligible for Summer SNAP for Children in Baltimore County. However, given inadequate funding levels, only 450 children in Baltimore County, less than 1% of those eligible, received this support in 2021.
- The total cost to fully fund the program is just \$100 per child, per year.
- Towson University economists found that increasing funds for this supplement will “greatly benefit” the economy while reducing food insecurity, creating additional jobs, and increasing tax revenues.

#### How Can I Help?

Please join us in advocating for full funding for these programs! The Road Map for Baltimore County charts a course that will reduce food insecurity and poverty for 78,300 County residents, including 51,627 children in very low-income households, 7,189 low income adults, and 19,851 BCPS students, with an investment of about \$6.7 million. Write or call your County Council person; contact information is available at [www.baltimorecountymd.gov/countycouncil/](http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/countycouncil/).

- Dr. Laurie Taylor-Mitchell, President, Student Support Network



**Summer SNAP for Children**

State funding for Summer SNAP for Children has been increased to \$4.8 million, which will reduce food insecurity and poverty for 50,000+ kids!

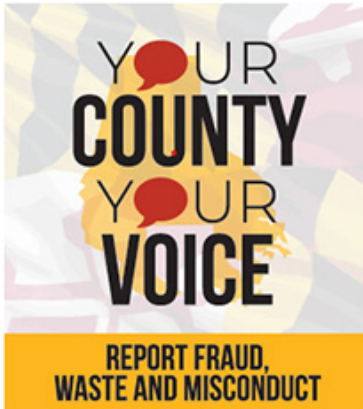
Maryland’s Summer SNAP for Children program helps families access food during school breaks with +\$30 per child, per summer month that is automatically added to existing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) accounts.

The Student Support Network has been a strong advocate for expanding Summer SNAP for Children for all eligible children in Baltimore County, and the state of Maryland, as it is a proven strategy to reduce food insecurity and poverty.



## COMMITTEES AND REPORTS

### BALTIMORE COUNTY OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL NEEDS TO BE FUNDED



Baltimore County Inspector General Kelly Madigan has done a remarkable job since her appointment to the newly created position in county government in 2019; her reports of confirmed cases of fraud, abuse and illegal acts may be found on the [Inspector General's website](#). Most recently, she uncovered the unlawful waiver of hundreds of dollars of county fees and charges connected with development of the Metro Center in Owings Mills that took place under the previous County Executive's tenure. Ms. Madigan reported, however, that the current administration failed to take the proper action upon discovering it.

What makes her accomplishments more remarkable is that she has achieved them on a budget that is significantly underfunded. Ms. Madigan's current budget of about \$354,000 pays for three positions: the Inspector General (IG), an investigator, and an administrative assistant. The job of the IG is to identify fraud, abuse and illegal acts in county government. The IG also serves as Executive Director of the County Ethics Commission, investigating complaints of violations of county ethics laws.

Very soon Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olszewski, Jr. will finalize his proposed budget for the IG's office for fiscal year 2023, which begins on July 1. The decision that he makes on the proposed budget is crucial because the County Council cannot increase it. **This budget must be increased.**

Comparison with other jurisdictions reinforces this conclusion. The Baltimore City IG has the same responsibilities in a jurisdiction with 270,000 fewer people, yet the city's IG office has a budget of about \$2,540,000 and **18 positions**. Montgomery County has an IG office with **14 positions** and 2 separate staff positions for its Ethics Commission; the combined budget for these two offices is about \$2,400,000.

A conservative estimate is that the Baltimore County IG's office needs at least **10-12 positions** to do its job properly. Sadly, there is plenty of work for this office. Baltimore County has a long and unfortunate history of corruption in county government. Ms. Madigan has had plenty to keep her busy, and there is much more work to do.

Not all elected officials support the IG's efforts. During a May 2021 County Council budget hearing, there was a heated discussion about Madigan's citation of a former county employee who used a county credit card to make almost \$30,000 in unauthorized purchases. During this exchange, Madigan was told that she just needs to "get more comfortable with some of the policies and procedures that happen here in the county."

It was a window into what ails Baltimore County government. Later in 2021, County Executive Olszewski drafted a bill that would have stripped the IG of many of her powers and crippled the office. Olszewski decided not to introduce it after there was a firestorm of public criticism of the bill, but the fight to save the IG's office is far from over.

**Please contact County Executive Olszewski stating that you support adequate funding of the Baltimore County IG. You can sign up to speak at [the budget virtual Town Hall meetings](#) during February and March. Sending an email or letter to County Executive Olszewski is another effective way for your voice to be heard. You can email [johnnyo@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:johnnyo@baltimorecountymd.gov), send a fax to 410-887-5781, or send a letter to the Office of the County Executive, Historic Courthouse, 400 Washington Avenue, Towson MD 21204.**

- David Plymyer, LWVBCo member

## COMMITTEES AND REPORTS

### OPEN LETTER TO EXECUTIVE: BALTIMORE COUNTY RESIDENTS SEEK TRANSPARENCY IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD

On February 8, 2022, the LWV Baltimore County joined other community advocacy groups in sending an open letter to Baltimore County Executive Olszewski urging transparency in the establishment of a Police Accountability Board. What follows is the content of that letter.

*After years of local advocates pushing for police reform and the subsequent public outcry after the murder of George Floyd and several local police misconduct cases in Baltimore County, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 [HB 670], which mandates a number of programs and procedures designed to improve transparency and accountability for police misconduct in Maryland. This act requires every County to establish a Police Accountability Board (PAB), an Administrative Charging Committee, and a Trial Board to oversee policing discipline.*



*Among that law's impactful reforms is a requirement that every county establish a Police Accountability Board (PAB) to receive public complaints of police misconduct, appoint residents to the trial board and administrative charging committees, and make policy recommendations to improve police accountability.*

*The following are needed to ensure real police accountability in Baltimore County: 1) participation on the PAB should be open to all Baltimore County residents who are eligible to vote, 2) the board makeup should reflect the diversity of the county, including members from overpoliced communities, 3) members should be compensated for their service and the board should be adequately funded, with independent counsel available to them, and 4) people with a conflict of interest should not be able to serve.*

*Local advocacy organizations have made several attempts over the past 5 months to request information from the County Executive, the Equitable Policing Workgroup, and Council Representatives for clarity on our local PAB implementation process. Despite these attempts, there has been no response and county representatives have not released any information about PAB plans. This seems to be in line with worrying trends we have seen in other counties, such as Prince George's, where no opportunity for public input or transparency has been provided, thus further undermining public trust and the whole point of the statewide police accountability legislation.*

*While Baltimore County's Memorandum of Understanding with the Fraternal Order of Police does not expire until July 2023, that does not excuse Baltimore County from fully complying with the state-mandated law. The PAB must meet, accept and report on misconduct complaints, and make policy recommendations starting in July 2022. We urge the County Executive to publicly announce the timeline for the legislation, include the community in the planning process, and implement PAB recommendations from communities most impacted by over-policing in Baltimore County.*

*Sincerely,  
American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland  
Baltimore County Progressive Democrats Club  
CASA  
Common Cause Maryland  
Communist Party of the USA, Baltimore Club  
Indivisible Towson  
Jews United for Justice Baltimore  
League of Women Voters of Baltimore County  
Randallstown NAACP  
SURJ Baltimore and Howard County*

*- Ericka McDonald, Co-President*

## LWVMD

### LWVMD ADVOCACY DURING THE 2022 MGA LEGISLATIVE SESSION



The 2022 Maryland General Assembly's legislative session is underway, and the LWVMD's Action Committee has been working around the clock tracking, testifying, and reporting on the almost 900 bills that have been filed so far!

A huge thank you to all those who came to the LWVMD advocate training workshops in December and signed up to be members of teams. The Action Team is so excited to have such great leads for topics like election protection, police reform, housing, paid family leave, healthcare, the environment - almost too many to count.

These teams are already doing round the clock work to keep up with their bills and provide the most updated information to the League.

LWVMD 2022 Issue Papers have been rolling out this month and the Action Committee has been alerting members via email as they are released. So far, papers covering topics such as redistricting, paid family leave, expanding access to healthcare, and many more have been submitted. The action teams encourage all League members to actively participate in LWVMD's legislative work by reading these papers, which can be found via email and on the LWVMD's [action blog](#).

Even more exciting than all the work that's to come is the work that's already underway. So far LWVMD has testified and is monitoring the following bills:

**HB0017: Campaign Finance - Recurring Contributions and Donations Requirements**

**HB0151: Hate Crimes - False Statements to Law Enforcement**

**HB0056: Commission on Student Behavioral Health and Mental Health Treatment**

**HB0085 Crimes on School Grounds**

**SB0150: Maryland Medical Assistance - Dental Coverage for Adults**

**HB0152: The Public Advocate Act**

**HB0073: General Assembly - Special Elections**

**HB0141: Equity in Transportation**

This list does not include everything that LWVMD has testified on, but it hopefully sheds light on the fact that LWVMD is acting on the issues that members deemed important this session. As the session moves on, members might be asked via Action Alerts to contact their legislators to help move critical legislation over the finish line; please respond to these alerts. The Action Committee also encourages members to look into the DEI Advocacy report for a detailed approach on LWVMD's efforts to uphold the League's DEI policy and put equity at the forefront of legislative priorities.

If you have any questions about the Action Committee or this legislative session, or if you would like to talk with one of the action team leaders, please email [action@lwvmd.org](mailto:action@lwvmd.org). To receive LWVMD action alerts, please visit the LWVMD website at [www.lwvmd.org/action\\_signup](http://www.lwvmd.org/action_signup) to sign-up for them. Through these alerts, you will be kept abreast of LWVMD action, such as their most recent call to action to secure full and equitable funding for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

- Nikki Tyree, LWVMD Executive Director

The LWV Baltimore County wants to give a big THANK YOU to members Keisha Walker, Nora Smith, Ericka McDonald, and Lisa Barkan who wrote testimony on behalf of the LWVMD for the following bills:

**HB453: Correctional Facilities - Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act**

**HB269 Juvenile Law - Juvenile Interrogation Protection Act**

**HB 454 Correctional Services - Prevention of Forced Infant Separation Act**

**HB 533 Occupations and Professions - Licenses, Certificates, and Registration - Immigrants**

## LWVMD

### LWVMD WINTER WORKSHOP WRAP-UP

Kudos to the Maryland League Board members for an exceptionally interesting Winter Workshop on January 29, 2022. More than 140 people attended via Zoom to hear Senator Benjamin Cardin, Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk, and Author Donald Green, PhD, and to learn about the LWV California criminal justice position.

Delegate Peña-Melnyk discussed equity in healthcare throughout the state. She noted that although Maryland is one of the most highly insured states in the union, there is still work to do: the county in Maryland with the highest number of Covid cases also has the most immigrants and our public health system is underfunded. Peña-Melnyk also shared some bills she is working on to protect our public health system, such as providing care for undocumented pregnant women, shielding the records of Maryland residents who have ended up in court for non-payment of rent, and addressing the large surprise hospital-medical bills for both insured and uninsured Marylanders primarily resulting from ER visits. Finally, the delegate is concerned about a significant increase in the homeless without help from the state.

Senator Benjamin Cardin updated attendees on the status of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and voters' rights' bills. Though the ERA's time for ratification has run out, currently there are 52 of the 60 sponsors needed to pass a bill that would continue the process of ratification; the senator urged attendees to continue pushing for the amendment's passage. Cardin warned that voting rights are under attack from dark money, redistricting of minority voters, and changes in state voting laws. The senator is thankful for legislators such as Representative John Sarbanes and others who are working on voting rights bills; Cardin is hopeful that parts of these bills will make it to the Senate floor for a vote. Lastly, the senator noted that filibuster rules are a stumbling block to moving forward and need to be changed.

Keynote speaker Dr. Donald Green, Burgess Professor of Political Science at Columbia University and author of *Getting Out the Vote*, shared findings from years' worth of randomized studies that show what really works to increase voter turnout. Personal efforts such as door to door outreach and personalized calls are the most effective; when using these tactics, conversations should be authentic, heartfelt, unscripted, unhurried and interactive. Dr. Green noted that canvassing and relational organizing, such as friend to friend appeals, are also effective because of the personal connections inherent in these efforts. Utilizing positive social pressure, like expressing gratitude for listening, works well, too. Green encouraged using different strategies to reach out to different populations, like hosting weekend events for younger voters or holding fun social gatherings like an Election Day fest to increase turnout. As for advocacy appeals on issues, Green said the data shows they do not tend to mobilize and that there is little evidence of synergy. He also did not think that making Election Day a national holiday would encourage higher voter turnout since many Americans tend to recreate or relax on national holidays. Finally, Green said that sending out postcards to voters were not particularly effective, but if such strategies were to be used, then they are best sent during the voting period.

Ashley Raveche of the LWV California discussed their criminal justice position, which they will bring to the national convention in June in the hopes of having it voted into a national League position. To achieve this goal, the LWV California is seeking endorsement from other Leagues, including the LWVMD, in the form of concurrence. The entire position can be found at [lwvc.org/our-work/positions/position-criminal-justice](http://lwvc.org/our-work/positions/position-criminal-justice), but in summary it strives for a system that is just, effective, equitable, transparent, and fosters public trust; eliminates systemic bias; collaborates between government and community-based programs; focuses on humane treatment and rehabilitation; and relies on evidence-based research for decisions. Though many Leagues, like the LWVMD, have positions related to criminal justice and have made significant achievements in this area, too often non-national positions are not broad enough to address the many ways in which the criminal justice system affects community members' lives. The LWV California position expands and broadens the scope of criminal justice reform and Leagues' ability to advocate for it. The broader position also deals directly with voting rights, upholds the League's DEI policy, and appeals to members of the community who are impacted by the system but whose voices are too often ignored. The LWVMD board will be meeting in the near future to determine whether or not to concur with this position.



- Neilson Andrews, Treasurer and Workshop Attendee

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