



ROBERT G. CASSILLY

Harford County Executive

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Harford's Cassilly Delivers State of the County Address Focused on Achievements in Public Safety, Responsible Budgeting, Quality of Life

BEL AIR, Md., (Jan. 15, 2025) – At the mid-point of his term, County Executive Bob Cassilly on Tuesday delivered his annual State of Harford County Address focusing on achievements in public safety, responsible budgeting, and quality of life, priorities that he said had not changed since his inauguration.

Citing public safety as his top priority, the county executive highlighted the county's successful takeover of emergency medical services, with 17 fully staffed ambulances operating countywide.

"I'm delighted to report that, thanks to our efforts, EMS response times are down – and we are saving lives every day."

He also thanked the county's volunteer firefighters, noting that their association recently voted unanimously to request some level of paid service.

"We are carefully evaluating their request," he said. "I want to be clear that we are being very well served by our volunteers, but we cannot ignore reality; it is imperative that we continue planning for the introduction of some level of paid fire service as resources permit."

Regarding law enforcement, County Executive Cassilly said, "We have honored our promise to keep Harford's sheriff's deputies our top funding priority. Over the first two years of this administration, we have increased police compensation by 14%, and we will continue our

investment in these outstanding men and women. We funded 10 new deputies and 4 new SROs - soon to be 7."

The county executive said that \$1.1M had been provided to Harford County Public Schools in the aftermath of the Joppatowne High School shooting to upgrade security there and countywide. He also pledged his continued support for laws that would inform schools about serious juvenile offenders and prevent violent youth from returning to schools and communities.

Regarding traffic and roads, the county executive said that the regular meetings he established with the Maryland State Highway Administration were showing progress on several projects, including a roundabout for the dangerous MD Route 23/Grafton Shop Road intersection.

Citing education as a priority, he said, "Let me be clear, Harford County has and will continue to fund our schools at or above state requirements."

In addition, he said the \$87M Homestead Wakefield ES project is moving forward and plans are underway for a new combination elementary school/Harford Academy replacement facility in Bel Air. Harford taxpayers will save \$50M on the latter project due to the Cassilly administration's suggestion that the project be located inside the county's designated growth area, also known as the development envelope, thereby qualifying it for state cost-sharing.

Regarding the budget, County Executive Cassilly said that his administration saw challenges coming two years ago. Despite criticism, he said that his administration had already taken multiple steps to reduce spending and he outlined them in detail. "Think of it as our version of DOGE before there was a DOGE," he said, referencing plans by President-elect Trump to cut unnecessary spending and maximize efficiencies at the federal level.

The county executive thanked the council for their support for increasing impact fees on developers, which had not been done for 20 years. "Those who choose to use government services [should] pay their fair share for those services rather than shifting the burden onto all taxpayers," he said.

Citing Gov. Moore's recent speech urging state and county leaders to cut spending and grow the economy, County Executive Cassilly said he agreed with the governor, adding "we cannot tax our way out of fiscal challenges – efficiencies and economic development are key."

The world is changing rapidly, he said, and Harford County is well-positioned for economic growth, adding:

"Instead of being a dumping ground for mega warehouses that chew up real estate and offer little in the way of living-wage jobs, we are growing well paying, modern manufacturing jobs and expanding opportunities for local businesses."

He thanked the council for supporting his efforts to stop high-density apartments from being built outside of urban areas. He said the long-awaited Ma & Pa Trail connection was expected to be completed in March 2026, and he outlined thousands of acres of farmland preserved and parks being planned under his administration.

Improvements to daily life from the Southern County Task Force, formed by the Cassilly administration to address longstanding challenges in Edgewood, Joppa and Belcamp, include a new livability code, 18 miles of road repaving, sidewalk repairs, 40 modern streetlights, increased street sweeping and community cleanups resulting in the removal of 37 dumpster loads of debris.

In closing, County Executive Cassilly said,

"Whether you live in Bel Air or Belcamp, Jarrettsville or Joppatowne, we are all neighbors. Everyone matters, no one is expendable, and we are up to the challenge of making our county the best it can be. I see it every day – we are rising together and the state of Harford County is strong."

The county executive's entire speech is published on the county website at <https://www.harfordcountymd.gov/1826/State-of-the-County-Addresses>.

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