



ROBERT G. CASSILLY

Harford County Executive

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Harford Executive Cassilly Delivers Fourth Annual State of the County Address Focused on Fiscal Responsibility, Citizen's Quality of Life

BEL AIR, Md., (Jan. 15, 2026) – Harford County Executive Bob Cassilly delivered his fourth annual State of the County Address on Tuesday, focused on fiscal responsibility, the quality of life for everyday citizens, and standing up to powerful special interests.

Fiscal responsibility

Noting that his administration had erased an inherited \$90M structural deficit, the county executive said, "I chose fiscal responsibility and efficiencies over tax increases ... because I did not want more government spending piled on top of our hardworking families."

Stopping unbridled development

"We stopped the plans ... to build mega-warehouses at Abingdon Woods and Perryman," he said, and stopped new apartments in Fallston, Benson, Forest Hill and Hickory, which are well outside of established urban areas, through changes to the zoning code.

Harford's economic future

The way forward for economic prosperity is not endless development, the county executive said, it's through support for our skilled workforce that unleashes opportunities in high-tech manufacturing, small businesses, defense and medical services. Support for business included an unprecedented \$1M in low-interest small business loans.

Public safety

Public safety is top priority, he said, demonstrated by the county's full funding of increases called for in the sheriff's salary study; the county's 17 active ambo units, which are saving lives every day with hot response times under eight minutes, and support for volunteer fire companies. A new voluntary cancer screening program for VFC members was announced.

Traffic

To reduce traffic congestion and aid efficiencies, the county executive outlined the county's unprecedented coordination with State Highway Administration (SHA), including a focus on synchronizing traffic lights along the county's main corridors of MD routes 24 and 924, US 1 and MD 22.

To mitigate critical traffic hazards, projects have been completed or are in the works with SHA on MD 23 at Grafton Shop Road, MD 40 at Ohio and Ostego, US 1 at Reckord Road, a new roundabout at Bel Air South Parkway and a project on Spesutia Road.

The county executive made a long-awaited announcement on Woodley Road:

"After years of effort, we are finally ready to move forward with construction of the road connection to divert truck traffic from residential areas on the Perryman Peninsula. We will be putting this project out to bid in February and anticipate shovels in the ground this summer."

Education

After fully funding the school budget in the current fiscal year 2026, the county executive announced he was prepared to fully fund an agreed upon 6 ½% increase, or \$23M, for next year, FY 2027. The funding is part of a three-year budget agreement with the superintendent and board of education to better align school funding with the expected growth in county revenue.

"Our teachers have gotten raises every year, and Harford County is on track to achieve the \$60K starting teacher salaries, as mandated by the Blueprint," County Executive Cassilly said.

Open space and places for children to play

Achievements include 200 acres of additional open space purchased for recreation countywide; 4,536 additional acres of farmland preserved; plans for five new ballfields in Fallston; renovations to fields in Hickory, 129 acres purchased in Joppa for ballfields and parkland; upgrades to Cunion Field in Edgewood, and a stunning 1,400 acres of waterfront property planned for the Oakington Park System.

What's next?

Planning and Zoning will be working with the community on a Master Plan for the next 10 years – the process will be transparent, user friendly, and focused on sustaining our economy while preserving a high quality of life.

The administration will continue to push back against solar farms on prime ag land and resist the state's plan for high density housing in the counties while the state continues to cut funding for supporting infrastructure.

A new workforce development center is planned in cooperation with Harford Community College and the public schools, to be located on the public transit line.

A new meat processing facility for farmers is in development.

Parks & Recreation will complete the Ma & Pa Trail connection this summer for a beautiful 8-mile trail that will connect three communities and four park systems: from Edgeley Grove in Fallston to Heavenly Waters Park through the Town of Bel Air to Blakes Venture to Friends Park in Forest Hill.

The county will continue working with the state on the extension of the Susquehanna River train trail and move forward with recreation centers in Aberdeen and Joppa.

He added, "We will invest in more activities and facilities for our growing senior population so they can remain a vital and active part of our community, and we will continue to expand broadband in the northern part of our county."

The county will help expand the high school apprenticeship program's success, where Harford County Public Schools is first in the state for youth apprenticeships. Funding to construct a new school for Harford Academy and a new elementary school is planned, along with a new roof at Halls Cross Roads Elementary in Aberdeen.

Regarding next year's county budget, County Executive Cassilly addressed the County Council directly, saying he planned to again prioritize public safety and education without raising taxes. He asked the council to refrain from making uniformed cuts to the 25% of the county budget that funds essential government functions in order to add more money to the 75% of the budget that funds outside agencies.

Noting that 2026 is the 250th anniversary of our nation's independence, the county executive concluded his remarks:

"... it's the people that make America great, not special interests or a powerful few. In Harford County, I've stood up to these powers, and trust me, it would have been a lot easier to 'go along and get along.' I could play the peacemaker by giving into demands for more spending, but I'd be doing it with taxpayer dollars and sacrificing our citizens' quality of life. I won't do that – so the noise will continue ... I will take the heat from power brokers and stay focused on our core values: fiscal responsibility, supporting public

safety, teachers, quality education, our seniors, economic strength, and opportunities for our citizens to live the American dream.”

A video highlighting Cassilly administration achievements was also presented and is published at <https://youtu.be/LGqCtDYczZY>.

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