



# THE BALTIMORE TIMES

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## Howard Alumna Supports HBCU Students Through Innovative "Move-In Day Mafia" Concept



*A 2024 Savannah State University student raises her hands in relief and happiness, to the delight of Move-In Day Mafia founder TeeJ Mercer, when she sees her personally designed dorm room, filled with all of her favorite needed and wanted items, where she will call her home, after experiencing homelessness before entering college. Mercer, a Howard University alumna and philanthropist, along with volunteer do-gooders, provides dorm room makeovers and monthly care packages for four years to HBCU freshmen who have aged out of foster care, are unhoused, or struggle with financial hardships. (See article on page 9 )*

*Photo: Move-in Day Mafia*

# 8 Tips to Stay Safe from Scams

Anyone can be a victim of a scam or fraud.

Scammers are always looking for ways to trick consumers out of their hard-earned money, but there are steps you can take to protect yourself and your loved ones. Being alert and informed are the best defenses to stop scammers in their tracks.

It's important to know the signs of a scam and always protect your personal information and account numbers—those are the things scammers want the most. In general, remember that anything that sounds extremely urgent, too good to be true, or suspicious, is likely a scam.

You can ignore, block and delete calls and messages that you don't recognize. If a suspicious message says something is wrong with a transaction or charge on your accounts, don't trust caller ID and call the number on the back of your card. Some common scams include:

### Watch out for that email, text or call from "your bank"

Scammers can impersonate banks, utility companies and government agencies to trick consumers out of money. Scammers will contact victims via call or text, demanding money to ensure something doesn't happen to their accounts. Sometimes, they say they need your account information to investigate suspicious activity. They "spoof" or trick you by impersonating the caller ID information from your bank, or website links that look legitimate. If someone calls you and tells you there's something wrong with your account, hang up and call your bank directly using the number on the back of your debit or credit card.

### Don't let your favorite retailers fool you

Scammers will claim to be a

company you may be familiar with and declare there is an issue with your account or a recent order or send you a fake receipt for goods to incite you to dispute them. Make purchases from trusted websites and vendors only; steer clear of private sellers or websites with sales at prices that seem too good to be true. Never go off an online platform to close a deal or communicate with a buyer or seller.

### Beware of rental scams

Scammers may pose as landlords looking to rent a property and convince the victim to send a deposit to hold it. Make sure the listing appears on multiple online platforms, and has a detailed description, contact information and good customer reviews. If possible, meet the landlord in person and visit the property to ensure the rental offering is legitimate before fulfilling any request for a money transfer.

### Beware of tech support offerings

Some scammers will assert there are issues with your computer by posing as tech support and encourage you to click suspicious links via text or pop-up windows on your computer to help solve your "issue." If a caller says your computer has a problem, hang up. Never give anyone remote access to your computer unless you can 100% verify who they are. If you're worried about a virus or other threat, call your security software company directly, using the phone number on its website.

### Stay away from "malvertising"

Scammers are placing fake phone numbers in search engines and online ads under the names of legitimate companies like banks or airlines. People call those numbers and are tricked into sharing account or other personal information. Avoid this

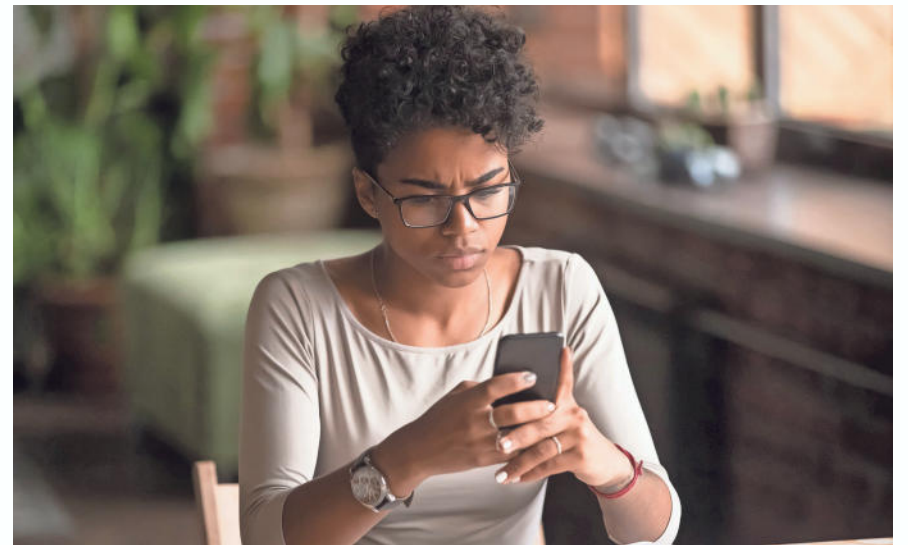


Photo courtesy of Pexels

"malvertising" by typing the full URL for the company in the address bar instead of entering the company name in the search bar, and don't click search ads.

### Beware of Artificial Intelligence (AI) or "deep fake" scams

Smart technology allows scammers to duplicate familiar voices and trick consumers out of their money and personal information. Scammers can gain the trust of victims by pretending to be a close family member or friend in need of money. Be extra careful of friends or family members calling suddenly and needing help. Hang up and call them back on a number you know to be theirs or call someone else who knows them.

### How you pay matters

Digital payment methods can help limit access to fraudsters finding your bank account. When sending money digitally, however, always make sure you know and trust who you are sending money to. If you send money, you may not get it back if it's a scam.

### Be Calm, Be Confident

Even if you aren't aware of all emerging threats, you can protect yourself from becoming a victim by refusing to give your personal or banking information if someone contacts you by email, text or phone. Creating strong passwords for your online accounts and changing them often can also help protect your digital footprint.

The best defense is to stay calm and confident and use technology to your advantage: ignore, delete and block calls, messages or emails from sources you don't recognize and remember that banks will never ask for personal information when calling you or urge you to send money.

If you become a victim, don't be embarrassed, and report it to your bank. Also, tell family and friends about your experience so they too can be on high alert.

For more fraud and scam prevention tips, visit [Chase.com/SecurityTips](https://Chase.com/SecurityTips), and [www.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov).

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## WATCH THE 2024 DTU FELLOWS POWER THEIR FUTURES WITH CHEVROLET



Together, these 10 HBCU students drive the summer internship of a lifetime with Black-owned newspapers



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## Local Nonprofit Accepting Nominations for Youth Awards, Brunch Fundraiser Tickets on Sale

By **Andrea Blackstone**

Nasaun Harrison, 19, attends college at Loyola University Maryland. The Baltimorean who received the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship will study abroad in Taiwan. He reflected on receiving IT TAKES TWO, INC's Tools for Success Scholarship in 2022 and 2023.

Jaemellah Jackson, a nonprofit founder and CEO of IT TAKES TWO, INC began an organization that is dedicated to enriching the lives of young people. It increases their opportunities through scholarships, education, and life skills programming.

"The scholarship helped me obtain essential materials such as textbooks and supplies. I was also able to focus more on my studies as the scholarship was attributed to relieving financial burdens stemming from my studies," Harrison said.

He added, "With a portion of their financial burden being taken away, students will have more time to focus on their studies. I also think that youth, like me, who benefit from support will also develop a want to give back."

Jackson, a community-minded Nottingham, Maryland-based mother, wife, nonprofit founder and consultant, revealed that 1,000 students have been supported through the nonprofit thus far.

"(Tools for Success) Scholarship funding is strictly for educational purposes. Monies can be used to purchase school supplies, uniforms, books, laptops/tablets, tutoring and Internet service, and to pay for extracurricular activities such as sports and academic club fees," said Jackson.

Harrison will share a virtual presentation about the benefits of traveling abroad, the Gilman Scholarship, and IT TAKES TWO, INC's Positioned for Greatness Youth Program (P4GYP) for the nonprofit's scholarship service

learning project later this month.

P4GYP helps students successfully handle middle and high school, properly prepare, and create a life after high school plan. Additionally, participants have opportunities to visit local colleges and universities, community colleges, and trade schools.

Supply Drive 365 is an initiative offered by the nonprofit to support students in need to receive school supplies for the entire school year.

IT TAKES TWO, INC continues to elevate and encourage youth through various awards. For example, nominations are currently being accepted for Rising Phoenix applicants and He/She's Got Game.

"This award represents resilience and overcoming adversity. We would like to hear how nominees rose from the "ashes" of the effects of personal life challenges and post-pandemic life, and achieved personal, academic, or other forms of success," Jackson said, referring to the Rising Phoenix Award.

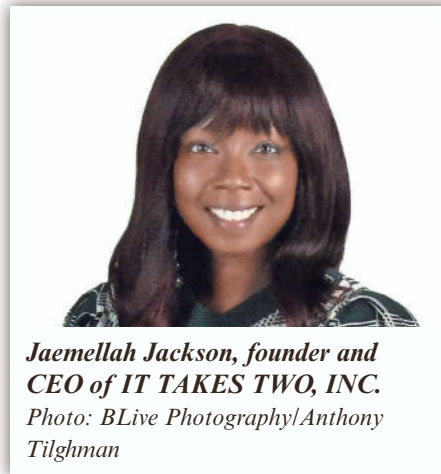
Jackson further explained that the nonprofit's new He/She's Got Game award is designed to celebrate student athletes.

"This award is for scholar-athletes who excel on and off the court/field/track not only with their academics, but leadership and sportsmanlike conduct. All sports are eligible," Jackson explained.

Additional nominations are also being accepted for a Leading by Example Award, Youth in Service Award, and Youth Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

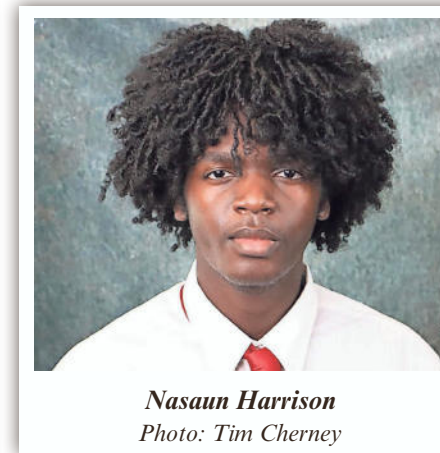
Nominees must be in grades 5-12 and reside in Baltimore City, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County, Charles County, Prince George's County or Montgomery County. The submission deadline for all awards is September 15, 2024.

A grand celebration and fundraiser will be held at the Youth & Community



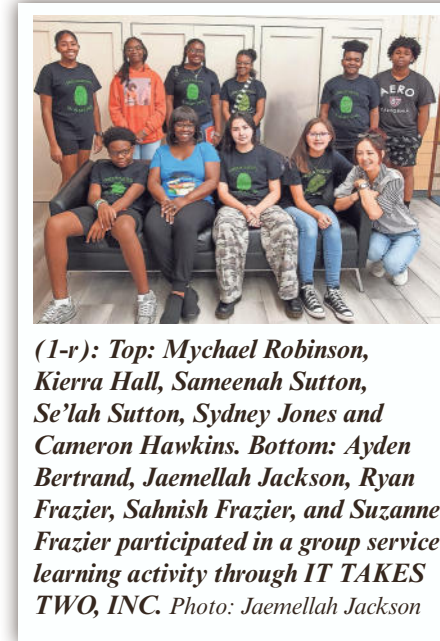
**Jaemellah Jackson, founder and CEO of IT TAKES TWO, INC.**

Photo: BLive Photography/Anthony Tilghman



**Nasaun Harrison**

Photo: Tim Cherney



**(1-r): Top: Mychael Robinson, Kierra Hall, Sameenah Sutton, Se'lah Sutton, Sydney Jones and Cameron Hawkins. Bottom: Ayden Bertrand, Jaemellah Jackson, Ryan Frazier, Sahnish Frazier, and Suzanne Frazier participated in a group service learning activity through IT TAKES TWO, INC. Photo: Jaemellah Jackson**

Awards Brunch 2024 hosted by IT TAKES TWO, INC! to recognize 2024-2025 Tools for Success Scholarship recipients, exceptional youth who are making a positive impact, young entrepreneurs, leaders, and athletes.

Jackson added, "We will honor four Tools for Success Scholarship recipients, five youth award honorees, and four community partners across Maryland counties Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Charles, Prince George's, Montgomery, and Baltimore City. Scholarship recipients and award honorees represent fifth-grade through college-aged students."

The Youth & Community Awards Brunch will be held on Saturday, October 12, 2024 at The Gallery, located at 337 Brightseat Road, Suite 201 in Hyattsville, Maryland. A delicious brunch provided by Chef Blue Culinary. Attendees will be entertained by "DJ Princess C," a youth entrepreneur and hear a guest speaker.

Harrison mentioned why the public should consider supporting a growing, local nonprofit.

"IT TAKES TWO, INC is an organization that has shown to really care for its community. They are strongly dedicated to empowering students and providing them with the resources they need to succeed. Whether this is by

giving students the opportunity to apply for scholarships, sending care packages to students, or hosting informational meetings, they are always supporting the academic and personal growth of young people. As a volunteer or donor, you'd be supporting that cause," he said.

Visit [www.ittakestwoinc.org/](http://www.ittakestwoinc.org/) nominations to find nomination links and to learn more about each category. Brunch tickets are on sale via <https://ittakestwoinc.org/events>.

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#### Mailing Address

The Baltimore Times  
2530 N. Charles Street, Suite 201  
Baltimore, MD 21218  
Phone: 410-366-3900  
<https://baltimoretimes-online.com/>



## Understanding Cannabis-related Expungement

### The Real Impact of Governor Moore’s Historic Cannabis Pardons

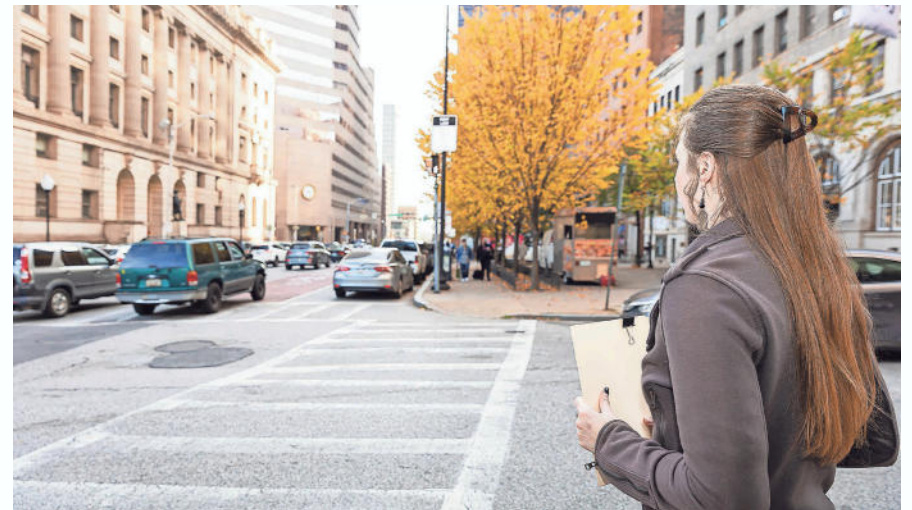
By Chris Sweeney

Maryland Governor Wes Moore made headlines in June with his groundbreaking decision to pardon all people convicted of cannabis possession under state law. This unprecedented move – affecting roughly 175,000 people – has sparked widespread media attention and is one of several recent government actions taken to address cannabis issues in Maryland. Yet, amidst the excitement, practical questions about the implications of these pardons remain.

A pardon issued by the governor clears an individual’s guilt and restores lost rights, such as voting or obtaining certain jobs and licenses. However, it doesn’t erase the criminal case itself or automatically expunge the record. While a pardon protects individuals from legal penalties associated with the crime, background checks might still reveal the case in court records.

Expungement, which removes the criminal record from public view, often accompanies a pardon, but isn’t automatic. Individuals must file for an expungement separately with the courts. And some offenses such as violent crimes cannot be expunged even if pardoned.

Gov. Moore’s cannabis pardons, however, simplify this process for those convicted of misdemeanor cannabis possession or related paraphernalia charges. The pardon applies to all individuals convicted of or receiving probation before judgment for possessing up to 1.5 ounces of cannabis or for possessing or using drug paraphernalia if cannabis possession was the only other charge in their case. It doesn’t cover additional charges beyond these cannabis-related ones. The courts have been instructed



Courtesy photo

to update their records to reflect these pardons, though individuals won’t receive direct notifications.

Meanwhile, Maryland’s courts are preparing to enact a new law triggered by the 2022 cannabis legalization referendum. That law required that the courts by July 1, 2024, automatically expunge all cases where cannabis possession was the only charge. For many, this will align perfectly with Gov. Moore’s pardons. However, not everyone will benefit from this automatic expungement. It is estimated that about 40,000 of the 175,000 pardoned individuals will see their records automatically expunged. Importantly, this automatic process will only remove records from the Criminal Justice Information System, a repository for fingerprints and other details about criminal cases, not from court databases – meaning cases will still be visible in some court systems. Though these cases will not appear in a Maryland Judiciary Case Search, they can still be found online via Maryland Judiciary Record Search,

(<https://mdceportal.courts.state.md.us/MDODYSSEYPORTAL/Home/Dashboard/29>), a less-known court database.

Gov. Moore’s pardons, alongside the Maryland legislature’s move towards automatic expungement, mark significant progress in addressing the harms of the War on Drugs and its disproportionate impact on marginalized communities. Yet, for those affected, the path forward can be unclear.

The best course of action for anyone with a cannabis-related conviction is to file for expungement. Although automatic expungement is on the horizon, filing a formal expungement request ensures that all traces of the case are removed from court records, providing a clean slate that can enhance employment and housing opportunities.

*Chris Sweeney is a staff attorney and the Workforce Development Project Manager at Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service.*

## Seven Thoughtful Ways to Support an Elder in Your Community

By **Andrea Blackstone**

Growing older is inevitable. No one can avoid it or concerns that may arise because of aging.

Carolyn Worthington, publisher of the Healthy Aging® multi-media platform and president of the non-profit Educational Television Network, Inc., started Healthy Aging Month in 1992.

“The annual observance month focuses national attention on the positive aspects of growing older, particularly among adults ages 45-plus. The mission is to encourage everyone to take personal responsibility for their health,” according to healthyaging.net.

Additionally, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution in 2021 making September National Healthy Aging Month “to raise awareness of and encourage healthy lifestyle behaviors and the prevention and management of chronic health conditions among older adults.”

Staying active mentally and socially; engaging in exercise; making an effort to eat right; engaging in hobbies; and staying on top of checkups and screenings are common pieces of advice linked to aging better. A lesser discussed topic is the importance of establishing a supportive village.

A report prepared by the Administration on Aging revealed that “in 2019, the population age 65+ was 54.1 million—30 million women and 24.1 million men.” Additionally, about 27% of adults over the age of 65 living in the community lived alone, while 61% lived with their spouse/partner. Another noteworthy report finding was that “the 2019 median income of older persons was \$27,398 (\$36,921 for men and \$21,815 for women).”

Elders in our communities might need the support of family and friends more than many people may realize.

Seven considerations could provide food for thought:

**1. Attempt to establish a connection with elderly neighbors that you do not know.**

Concerned neighbors can set the tone for their willingness to look out for elders in the community. They can take the initiative to introduce themselves, wave, and start simple conversations to break the ice with them.

**2. Offer to help with simple tasks.**

If an elderly neighbor lives next door to you, perhaps you may offer to move their garbage cans to the street and return them when you tend to your own trash; pick something up from the store; sweep a front step; or do a simple errand when you may be on the way to do your own. Present the offer kindly without implying that someone is a burden, bother, or incapable of the task. After making a few offers, a person may think about it over time, and then accept a helping hand.

**3. Exchange cell phone numbers.**

If you find out that an elderly neighbor resides alone, consider helping him or her to stay connected to at least one or two people in the community, whether it is through an active neighborhood association, or by taking the initiative to share contact information. After you get to know your neighbor, you should check on the individual or share important information that he or she may have missed.

**4. Introduce yourself to an elder’s caregiver.**

After you get to know a neighbor that you may not have initially known, establishing a second point of contact may be helpful. If an emergency arises, do you know how to reach another



*Photo: Getty Images*

person who may not live with your neighbor who may live alone? Establish trust and assurance that your goal is to look out for a community member.

**5. Listen to elders.**

Slow down for five minutes. Establish a check-in routine. Try to call at least one elder in your family or village, or knock on his or her door, at least once a week. A person may be lonely or have an unaddressed problem if no one takes the time to ask questions or hear what is said.

**6. Pay attention to patterns and habits.**

Humans exhibit habits that people who observe us may notice. If your neighbor does not appear to leave the house for an extended period, answer the door when people such as home

health aids are expected to come, or if you notice that a person appears sick or troubled from afar, check in with them. If you still suspect something is wrong, follow your instincts.

**7. Know when to seek help.**

Contact a person on your neighbor’s behalf if he or she would like your support or if you suspect something could be wrong. If it is warranted, contact your local police department’s non-emergency number to request a welfare check. You may save a life simply by requesting that a police officer physically stop by to ensure that a neighbor or loved one is okay.

# Dr. Tshaka Cunningham Carves a Path for African Americans in Science

By Stacy M. Brown

NNPA Newswire Senior National

Correspondent

@StacyBrownMedia

Dr. Tshaka Cunningham, a pioneering molecular biologist, has made an extraordinary journey from the Shaw neighborhood of Washington, D.C. to the cutting edge of precision medicine and genomics. Returning to his roots for an interview on the PBS show “The Chavis Chronicles,” Cunningham shared insights into his career, the importance of diversity in science, and his commitment to advancing genomics for the betterment of all communities.

Raised in D.C.’s historic Shaw area, Dr. Cunningham’s early exposure to science came from a deeply personal source—his grandmother, a cancer researcher who played a pivotal role in sparking his lifelong passion for molecular biology. “I was exposed to science at an early age from my grandmother, a cancer researcher,” Cunningham said before his 30-minute discussion with National Newspaper Publishers Association President and CEO Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., the host of the Chavis Chronicles. “She sparked in me that intellectual curiosity of what caused a cancer cell to be a cancer cell. It’s fascinating to me.”

This fascination led Cunningham to pursue a career in molecular biology, a field that explores the fundamental building blocks of life. “The reason I became a molecular biologist is because the sum total of the organism that we are is a collection of molecules that know how to beautifully orchestrate the symphony that is life,” he explains. A relentless curiosity and a desire to comprehend life at its most fundamental level led him from Princeton University, where he received his bachelor’s degree, to Rockefeller University for his PhD, and postdoctoral training at the Pasteur

Institute in Paris and the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda.

But Cunningham’s journey was not just about academic achievements; it was also about overcoming the social challenges of being a “cool nerd” in a community where academic excellence wasn’t always celebrated. “I liked playing sports and chasing girls,” Cunningham admits with a smile. “But I remember growing up here in D.C., it wasn’t cool to be smart back in the day, so I used to have to lie about my grades. But we have to make it cool to be a nerd and get good grades.”

Significant contributions to science and society have been a hallmark of his career. At the Department of Veterans Affairs, Cunningham played a critical role in overseeing national research programs in aging and neurodegenerative diseases. He also spearheaded initiatives to ensure minority veterans were well-represented in the VA’s Million Veteran Program, emphasizing the importance of diversity in genomic research.

Motivated by a commitment to making precision medicine more inclusive, Cunningham co-founded the Faith-Based Genetic Research Institute, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving lives through genomics. His belief in the potential of science to benefit all communities is unwavering. “More of our people should be involved in science,” he says. “It takes a level of curiosity, tenacity, and resourcefulness to be a scientist. They call it research for a reason because you have to search and research and constantly fail in the lab. Our people are good at being resourceful and tenacious, and that’s what it takes to be scientists.”

As the co-founder and Chief Scientific Officer of Polaris Genomics and TruGenomix Health Inc., Cunningham is at the forefront of using genomics to tackle some of the most pressing health challenges, including PTSD. He emphasizes the importance of understanding diseases at the molecular

level to develop effective treatments.

“Some cancers we are getting there, and some we can cure,” Cunningham notes. “In the next 20–25 years, that percentage will go up. Prevention helps us cure, but we have to understand at the molecular level what causes the disease, and that’s what people like me do; molecular biologists and researchers continue to do.”

His peers said Cunningham’s journey from Shaw to shaping the future of genomics is a testament to the power of curiosity, determination, and the pursuit of knowledge. His work is not just about advancing science; it’s about breaking down barriers and ensuring that genomics benefits are accessible to all communities.

“Not only as it pertains to communities of color but all humanity; these myths



*(Left-right): Dr. Tshaka Cunningham with National Newspaper Publishers Association President and CEO Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr. Photo: Stacy M. Brown*

and stereotypes that are out here are from white supremacists, and they are not based on truth and facts,” Chavis stated. “Science is based on truth and facts. If our nation was better informed, we would not be so divisive.”



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## College Student from Baltimore Selected for the 2024-2026 Obama-Chesky Scholarship

By **Andrea Blackstone**

Charity Fisher, 20, reminisced about what life was like in her formative years growing up in Baltimore City. She recalled that some of life's peaks consisted of hanging out at her grandmother's house, cracking crabs, cracking jokes, and watching the Super Bowl.

"The valleys were the moments when the grief settles in, from losing those family members, or from losing friends to community violence, or just not knowing if you'll even make it to see 18," she explained.

The first-generation college student has been moving forward to embrace her potential as a student, developing leader, and believer in God who asked Him to give her a story to tell. Fisher's dream came true.

An announcement was made on August 27, 2024, that the Clark Atlanta University junior majoring in Social Work was selected as a part of the third cohort of Voyager Scholarship for Public Service recipients.

"The Obama-Chesky Scholarship for Public Service supports students who have a passion for helping others, experience serving their communities, and can demonstrate an expansive view of what's possible through public service," according to The Barack Obama Foundation's website.

The Voyager Scholarship was created by former President Barack Obama, Michelle Obama, and Brian Chesky, co-founder and CEO of Airbnb to help build the next generation of leaders.

Fisher said that she has gone through adverse childhood experiences and has experienced going through therapy. She remains passionate about mental health advocacy and

suicide prevention. Fisher started a Baltimore-based community she calls Homegrown the Collective in 2022 while she was still a high school student. Through her curated healing experiences, Fisher serves youth, ages 15-24 years old. She has hosted workshops, and free mental health retreats. Fisher has also given young people a space to learn about their mental health and a place to receive care packages.

"I believe that the impact that it's [Homegrown the Collective] having is destigmatizing what engaging with their mental health looks like. Typically in Baltimore, a lot of times when driving by places, you see individuals who are experiencing homelessness, or who are having a mental health episode, and so we judge them and we place shame onto them, but in these spaces, these healing experiences that I curate, I allow the youth to simply embrace what they're going through without any judgment," Fisher added.

She mentioned the reality of being raised in the Black community with assumptions that can accompany mental health challenges.

"But in these spaces, we leave all of that at the door, and we embrace that as a uniqueness to our individuality. We try to have conversations about it so that it feels like we can normalize it, because we don't talk about mental health as often as we should, and our generation is doing a good job of bringing those conversations to the table," Fisher said, explaining her approach through Homegrown the Collective.

Fisher stated that having this opportunity to be a Voyager Scholarship for Public Service recipient will allow her to deepen her public service. She plans to focus on

investigating the relationship between mental health disparities and the increasing suicide rate among Black Americans.

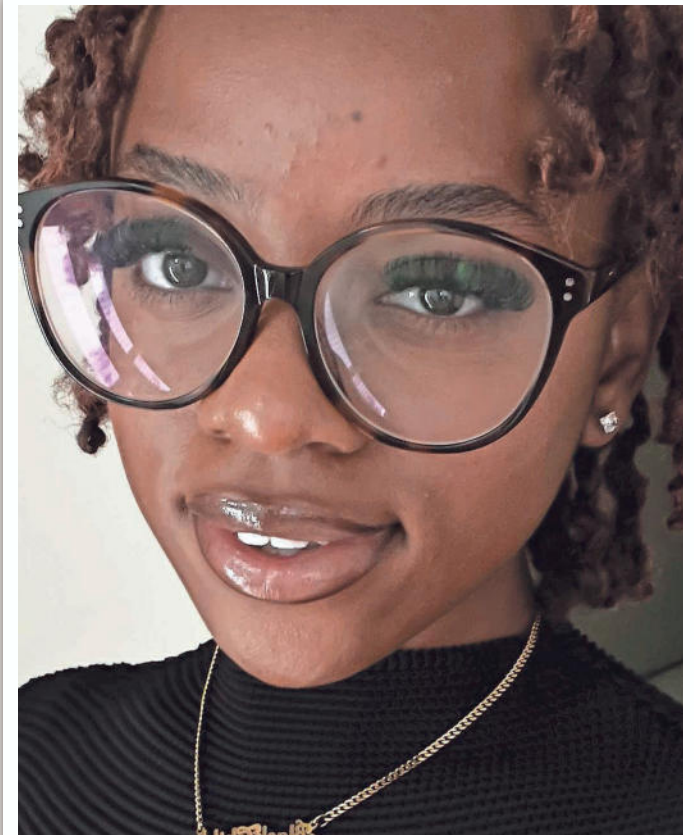
Each year, the scholarship provides 100 college juniors who are called "Voyagers" with: up to \$50,000 in financial aid; funding and free Airbnb housing to pursue a summer work-travel experience; a 10-year travel stipend; and mentorship through a network of leaders.

The new cohort consists of 100 students from 44 states and territories, representing 88 colleges and universities across the United States, according to a press release.

Lydia Grate, Global Programs Associate, Voyager Scholarship at the Obama Foundation further explained that students apply when they are rising juniors and remain in the two-year program until their senior year.

Grate also said that the world needs changemakers now more than ever.

"I think the big focus ...is just really passing the baton to this next generation of changemakers and really empowering them and giving them the tools and resources they need to



*Charity Fisher, a 2024-2026 Voyager Scholarship recipient, is part of a cohort of 100 college juniors planning to pursue a public service career. Photo: The Obama Foundation*

continue their public service journey and create positive change in this world," she added.

Fisher mentioned that she is still in disbelief that she was selected to become a "Voyager," although she is excited about the opportunity.

"There's a lot of brilliance that comes from the [Baltimore] City, and I want to redirect all of the light back to Baltimore City every chance I get," she reminded.

Visit [www.obama.org/programs/voyager-scholarship](http://www.obama.org/programs/voyager-scholarship) to learn more about the Voyager Scholarship.



# Howard Alumna Supports HBCU Students Through Innovative “Move-In Day Mafia” Concept

By Andrea Blackstone

TeeJ Mercer, a joyous Howard University alumna and philanthropist, along with fellow do-gooders, know that little things can add up to mean a lot. They spread joy to HBCU freshmen, transforming their dorm rooms into comfy, stylish spaces and by blessing them with care packages.

“Our official description is “Move-In Day Mafia [Mafia],” a “mob” of volunteers who descend upon HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges & Universities) to provide dorm room makeovers and monthly care packages for four years to students who have aged out of foster care, are unhoused, or grapple with severe financial hardships,” Mercer explained.

The author, speaker and media coach who is based in Atlanta, Georgia, spent 25 years working in Hollywood as an award-winning TV editor and producer.

“I’m turning Mafia into a dorm room makeover show,” said Mercer. “My life’s purpose and divine assignment is to be a joy-bringer,” Mercer added.

TeeJ’s HBCU Bingo sparked the “Move-In Day Mafia” concept in 2020. Mercer has just moved to Atlanta, Georgia from Los Angeles, California. The world had shut down for the pandemic. Graduation cancellations began. Then, Mercer created a virtual Bingo game that surprisingly took off.

“Being a graduate of Howard University and an advocate for HBCUs, I couldn’t stand by and do nothing. I prayed and asked God to show me what I could do to bring joy to these graduates. My answer? TeeJ’s HBCU BINGO! I tapped into my active social media following, told them my idea, and asked for help,” she said. Mercer added, “As a result, we raised over \$1

million in cash and prizes in less than four weeks, and we gave it to the 2020 grads of HBCUs in a series of epic virtual Bingo games! Our prizes ranged from cold, hard cash, to Mac computers, to resume services, to vocal coaching, to LinkedIn consults.”

The graduates received nearly \$2,000 in prizes just for registering. Almost 500 graduates played the game over the course of four Saturdays in June 2020, according to Mercer.

TeeJ’s HBCU Bingo made the national news. “CBS Evening News with Norah O’Donnell” wanted to interview her and a graduate who played the game. That is when Mercer learned about the student who inspired Mafia.

“When she [the student] started at her HBCU, she’d aged out of foster care. Her social worker drove her to campus, pulled up to the curb, let her unload what little she had, and left her. That broke my heart. So once again, I prayed and asked God to show me what I could do so that no student had to go through this transition alone and Move-In Day Mafia was born!” Mercer exclaimed.

During the first Move-In Day Mafia year, 13 students were located at Paul Quinn College in Dallas, Texas. Thirty-one students were located at five HBCU’s in the second. Then, this year, 44 students will be served at nineteen HBCUs.

HBCU students apply around May of each year.

“We provide each scholar with a team of volunteers on move-in day to



Celebrity interior designer Nikki Klugh, (standing on the far left), designs each student’s dorm room, and is pictured with Move-In Day Mafia founder TeeJ Mercer, (center). They are surrounded by a “Mob” of volunteers who gathered at Prairie View University in 2023, to move in students in need. Photo: Move-in Day Mafia



Move-In Day Mafia Founder, TeeJ Mercer, is showcasing a Move-In Day Mafia (MIDM) hoodie. Branded MIDM merchandise sales, and donations from individuals and corporations, fund the work that the Mafia carries out to help HBCU students around the country.

Photo: Tina B. Photos

set up their individually designed dorm room created by an interior design firm, Nikki Klugh Design Group. It is a surprise to see their room completely done for them, plus all of the decorations, hygiene and household essentials, along with favorite snacks. And yes, we walk with them for four years,” said Mercer.

Mercer also stated that 70% of kids in foster care dream of college; 3% see their dream realized; and 1% graduate.

“We are on a mission to demolish the foster care to prison pipeline and build a foster care to HBCU GRADUATE pipeline,” she said.

Move-In Day Mafia is composed of all volunteers such as LaTerra Wise, an office manager from Salisbury, Maryland. She chose to get involved with Mafia because she loves the mission.

“Like TeeJ, I never considered this population when it came to moving into college. After moving my daughter

into her dorm, I couldn’t fathom a student navigating that process alone, so I knew I had to help in any way I could,” the project manager for Move-In Day Mafia explained.

Mercer noted that \$3,800 covers a scholar’s move-in essentials and monthly care packages for a school year. There is only one more 2024-2025 HBCU Move-In Day Mafia event left to do. “Prairie View is a two-parter. One on Sept 7, 2024, and the final [one] is on September 28,” Mercer noted.

“Our scholars have landed internships with a judge, a bank, a mayor’s office. One became ‘Mr. Sophomore,’” Mercer also shared. “All because we’ve freed up time and mental bandwidth for them to explore and grow.”

Visit <https://www.moveindaymafia.org> to learn more about Move-In Day Mafia, donate to the cause, or to volunteer.



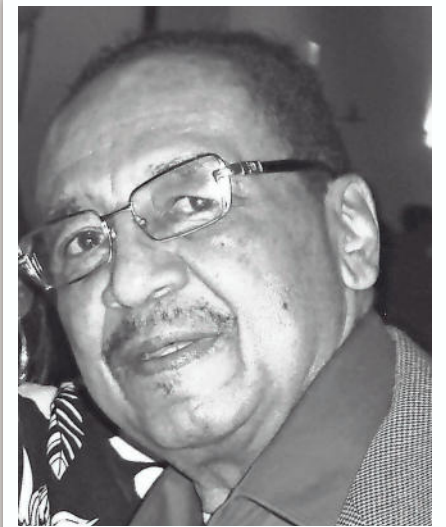
## My Pictures Will Tell The Stories

By Rosa Pryor

Well, my friends, it is about that time. I do hope I'll see you somewhere, someplace at one of these events. Tap me on the shoulders and say "hello." Remember, if you need me, call me at 410-833-9474 anytime or you can email me at rosapryor@aol.com, or you can send me a letter or flyers to Rosa Pryor, 214 Conewood Avenue, Reisterstown, Maryland 21136. **UNTIL THE NEXT TIME, I'M MUSICALLY YOURS.**



*Andy Ennis, my dearest friend, former musician, and one of America's finest tenor saxophone players passed away on Saturday, August 31, 2024. He had been performing professionally since 1957 at the Royal Theatre, and was a member of the Ray Charles Band and the brother of the late Ethel Ennis. May he rest in peace. Condolences to the family. Funeral arrangements had not been made by press time.*



*William "Tank" Hill, the husband of Viola Wilson "Pungie" Hill passed away last week. His viewing is Friday, September 6 from 4-7 p.m. at Howard Funeral Howard on Reisterstown Road. The funeral service will be at Saint Bernadine, 3812 Edmondson Avenue at 10 a.m. May he rest in peace. My condolences to "Pungie" and her family.*



*"Another Nite to Remember," with Panama Band and vocalist Charron Oliver performing at the Bambou Venue on Franklintown Road on Saturday, September 7. Showtime is 7-11 p.m. A cash bar and food vendors will be on site. For more information, call Michelle Smith at 443-350-9504.*



*William C. Hutchins Birthday & Lifetime Achievement will be celebrated at "The View," located inside of City View, 6700 Security Blvd. on Tuesday, September 10 from 6-10 p.m. Free admission. All are invited.*



*Craig Alston is performing with his band at a Jazz Brunch at Who Know's Restaurant & Lounge, located at 2101 Maryland in Baltimore on Sunday, September 8 from 2-4 p.m. "Rambling Rose" will see you there. For more information, call 443-571-0736.*



**THE ROLLEX BAND**



*Check out another production of CH Productions featuring his "Black & White Attire" is required "Virgo Celebration" featuring Rollex Band, J'Kar, Ms. Shay and Company with DJ Rico on Sunday, September 11, 2024 from 4-9 at Diamondz Events Center, 9980 Liberty Road, Randallstown, Maryland. For ticket information, call 443-963-5711 or Janora at 443-955-8600 and tell them "Rambling Rose" told you.*

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**Sunday, September 8, 2024**

**4:00 PM**

*All are welcome*

**\* A Freewill Offering will be  
raised to support  
scholarship recipients.**

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Publicity Chairperson

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**DR. HAROLD A. CARTER, JR., PASTOR**

## Ravens Defensive Lineman Justin Madubuike Changes Name to Nnamdi

By Tyler Hamilton

As the Baltimore Ravens start the new season, their team broadcast booth will have a new name on their flip charts. That new name is none other than Nnamdi Madubuike formerly known as Justin.

The 26-year-old defensive tackle changed his name recently according to the team website. Madubuike had gone by his English first name Justin, which is written on his birth certificate, from elementary school until 2024. More recently, he opted to switch to his Nigerian name Nnamdi in recognition of his heritage.

A quick peek at his Instagram page shows where he proudly displays the new name, Nnamdi Madubuike on the team issues nameplate above his locker. According to the team site, Madubuike's perspective changed during the offseason after he signed a four-year, \$98 million contract extension to remain in Baltimore. Madubuike wanted to pay homage to his heritage.

"Coming from Nigerian culture, our parents give us like an American name and give us a Nigerian name," Madubuike said via the team site. "When we were growing up as little kids, they addressed us by our Nigerian name. So Nnamdi, I believe in my heart, that's my real name."

The name change is nothing new to Madubuike parents. They've always called him Nnamdi. It was just people outside of their home that referred to him as Justin. Now everyone will call him by his true name.

Madubuike isn't the first Ravens player to change their name. Outside linebacker Odefe Oweh changed



*Nnamdi Madubuike*

*Photo: Michael Owens/Getty Images*

his name from Jayson in 2021. Like Madubuike, Oweh wanted to pay respects to his African heritage.

The name change is part of Madubuike's quest to keep evolving and improving. It's a way for him to be real with himself.

"Just learning from the older vets and stuff, I keep finding ways to get better every single year. I just started to keep everything real in terms of my life," Madubuike told the team site.

"After I signed my contract, I just need to keep doing that. I just felt like when I keep it real, the better player I am, the better man I am. I just was like, you know, I'm going to go with my real name. So Nnamdi is my real name."

NFL fans may have heard the name before because of former All-Pro cornerback Nnamdi Asomugha. Now another All-Pro will shine light on the name.

Changing the name has a special

reverence for Madubuike. The name Nnamdi means "My father is alive" according to nameberry.com.

It's fitting that his father, Festus approved of the name change.

"My dad's my biggest supporter, so when he approved it, I was like, 'It's a go,'" Madubuike said.

So when you're watching Ravens games and hear the play-by-play announcer call a new name, just know it's the same old player.



THE BALTIMORE TIMES

**BEST OF  
BLACK**

**BALTIMORE**

**2024 NOMINATIONS KICK OFF**

**SEPT 9<sup>TH</sup> 2024**

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS  
OFFICE OF ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION  
NOTICE OF LETTING

Sealed Bids or Proposals, in duplicate addressed to the Board of Estimates of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore and marked for **WATER CONTRACT NO. 1354R-Ashburton Washwater Lake Dredging** will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until 11:00 A.M on **October 16, 2024**. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. Bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates and can be watched live on CharmTV's cable channel 25/1085HD; charmtvbaltimore.com/watch-live or listen in at (443) 984-1696 (ACCESS CODE: 0842939) from City Hall at Noon. The Contract Documents may be examined, without charge, at Contract Administration 4 South Frederick Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor (410) 396-4041 as of **September 6, 2024** and copies may be purchased for a non-refundable cost of **150.00**. **Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package.** All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by the City of Baltimore Contractors Qualification Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396-6883 or contact OBC at 4 S Frederick St., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Baltimore, MD 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a joint venture ("JV"), then in that event, the document that established the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Category required for bidding on this project is **G90013 Dredging**. Cost Qualification Range for this work shall be **\$5,000,000.01 to \$10,000,000.00**.

A "Pre-Bidding Information" session will be conducted via Microsoft Teams. Vendor can call 1 667-401-2804 Phone Conference ID: 493 020 472# or Microsoft Teams Meeting ID: 254 328 680 671 Passcode: eSBYWt on **September 11, 2024 at 10:00 AM**.

A site visit to the Ashburton Wash Water Lake will be conducted on **September 20, 2024 at 10:00 am**. For any Pre-bid questions contact Mr. Farid Sikander at [farid.sikander@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:farid.sikander@baltimorecity.gov). Contractor questions shall be submitted (in writing only) by **October 4, 2024, 4:00 PM**.

To purchase a bid book, please make an electronic request at: [https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/dpw-construction-projects-notice-letting and dpwbidopportunities@baltimorecity.gov](https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/dpw-construction-projects-notice-letting-and-dpwbidopportunities@baltimorecity.gov). For further inquiries about purchasing bid documents, please contact the assigned Contract Administrator [Doreen.diamond@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Doreen.diamond@baltimorecity.gov)

**Principal items of work for this contract include, but are not limited to:**

Mobilization and furnishing of all labor, material, equipment, and incidentals necessary for the removal of alum sludge and filter backwash solids from the Washwater Lake and final disposal of the sludge and filter backwash solids in an approved disposal site. The solids will need to be removed from the Washwater Lake, dewatered on site to reduce the amount of water to be hauled and disposed, and trucked to a final disposal site. After the work is completed, site restoration of all disturbed areas will be performed.

The MBE goal is **27%**

The WBE goal is **14%**

APPROVED:  
Clerk, Board of Estimates

APPROVED:  
Khalil Zaied  
Acting Director  
Department of Public Works

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS  
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Sealed Bids or Proposals, in duplicate addressed to the Board of Estimates of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore and marked for **WATER CONTRACT NO. 1418-Small Water Main Replacement at Yale Heights** will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until 11:00 A.M on **October 16, 2024**. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. Bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates and can be watched live on CharmTV's cable channel 25/1085HD; charmtvbaltimore.com/watch-live or listen in at (443) 984-1696 (ACCESS CODE: 0842939) from City Hall at Noon. The Contract Documents may be examined, without charge, at Contract Administration 4 South Frederick Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor (410) 396-4041 as of **September 6, 2024** and copies may be purchased for a non-refundable cost of **100.00**. **Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package.** All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by the City of Baltimore Contractors Qualification Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396-6883 or contact OBC at 4 S Frederick St., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Baltimore, MD 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a joint venture ("JV"), then in that event, the document that established the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Category required for bidding on this project is **B02551 – Water Mains**. Cost Qualification Range for this work shall be **\$5,000,000.01 to \$10,000,000.00**.

A "Pre-Bidding Information" session will be conducted via Microsoft Team Meeting. Vendor can call 1 667-228-6519 Phone Conference ID: 941 621 589# on **September 11, 2024, at 1:00 PM**. Contractors questions shall be submitted via email to Latonia Walston at [LWalston@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:LWalston@baltimorecity.gov) by **September 18, 2024 at 4:30 PM**.

Questions submitted after the deadline may not be responded to and Contractors will be required to submit their bids based on the available information.

To purchase a bid book, please make an electronic request at: [https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/dpw-construction-projects-notice-letting and dpwbidopportunities@baltimorecity.gov](https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/dpw-construction-projects-notice-letting-and-dpwbidopportunities@baltimorecity.gov). For further inquiries about purchasing bid documents, please contact the assigned Contract Administrator [LWalston@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:LWalston@baltimorecity.gov)

**Principal items of work for this contract include, but are not limited to:**

Abandonment and/or removal of existing water mains and installation of various sized new ductile iron pipes, valves, fittings and appurtenances, pipe restraints, replacement/installation of fire hydrants, small (residential) meter settings and meter vaults, renew and replacement of existing water services, temporary bypass piping, erosion and sediment control measures, maintenance of traffic measures, sidewalks restoration, curb and gutter, and roadway paving, as required.

**This project is a recipient of the WIFIA program**

The MBE goal is **30%**

The WBE goal is **15%**

APPROVED:  
Clerk, Board of Estimates

APPROVED:  
Khalil Zaied  
Acting Director  
Department of Public Works

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Sealed Bids or Proposals, in duplicate addressed to the Board of Estimates of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore and marked for **WATER CONTRACT NO. 1445-Loch Raven Drive Over Unnamed Tributary-LRD Culvert No. 11** will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until 11:00 A.M on **October 16, 2024**. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. Bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates and can be watched live on CharmTV's cable channel 25/1085HD; charmtvbaltimore.com/watch-live or listen in at (443) 984-1696 (ACCESS CODE: 0842939) from City Hall at Noon. The Contract Documents may be examined, without charge, at Contract Administration 4 South Frederick Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor (410) 396-4041 as of **September 6, 2024** and copies may be purchased for a non-refundable cost of **200.00**. **Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package.** All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by the City of Baltimore Contractors Qualification Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396-6883 or contact OBC at 4 S Frederick St., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Baltimore, MD 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a joint venture ("JV"), then in that event, the document that established the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Category required for bidding on this project is **B02554 Drainage Structures**. Cost Qualification Range for this work shall be **\$100,000,000.01 to \$500,000,000.00**.

A "Pre-Bidding Information" session will be conducted virtually on September 12, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.. Vendor can access this Microsoft Teams virtual meeting by utilizing the following ID and passcode: Meeting ID: 226 501 988 667 Passcode: twWA65 or Vendors can call Phone Conference ID: 1 667-401-2804 Passcode: 303530332#.

A site visit will be held on September 19, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.

Contractor questions will be accepted (in writing only) until **October 4, 2024**. For any bid questions, please contact Mr. Farid Sikander at farid.sikander@baltimorecity.gov

To purchase a bid book, please make an electronic request at: [https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/dpw-construction-projects-notice-letting\\_and\\_dpwbidopportunities@baltimorecity.gov](https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/dpw-construction-projects-notice-letting_and_dpwbidopportunities@baltimorecity.gov). For further inquiries about purchasing bid documents, please contact the assigned Contract Administrator [Cynthia.Harry@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Cynthia.Harry@baltimorecity.gov)

**Principal items of work for this contract include, but are not limited to:**

Construction of culvert improvements and washout area at Culvert No. 11 per the Plans.

The MBE goal is **30%**

The WBE goal is **15%**

APPROVED:  
Clerk, Board of Estimates

APPROVED:  
Khalil Zaied  
Acting Director  
Department of Public Works

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Sealed Bids or Proposals, in duplicate addressed to the Board of Estimates of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore and marked for **WATER CONTRACT NO. 1449-Repaving Utility Cuts and Sidewalk Restoration at Various Locations** will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until 11:00 A.M on **October 16, 2024**. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. Bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates and can be watched live on CharmTV's cable channel 25/1085HD; charmtvbaltimore.com/watch-live or listen in at (443) 984-1696 (ACCESS CODE: 0842939) from City Hall at Noon. The Contract Documents may be examined, without charge, at Contract Administration 4 South Frederick Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor (410) 396-4041 as of **September 6, 2024** and copies may be purchased for a non-refundable cost of **100.00**. **Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package.** All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by the City of Baltimore Contractors Qualification Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396-6883 or contact OBC at 4 S Frederick St., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Baltimore, MD 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a joint venture ("JV"), then in that event, the document that established the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Category required for bidding on this project is **A02602-Bituminous Concrete Paving**. Cost Qualification Range for this work shall be **\$5,000,000.01 to \$10,000,000.00**.

A "Pre-Bidding Information" session will be conducted via Conference Call. Vendor can call 443-984-1696 Passcode: 4250406# on **September 13, 2024, at 10:00 AM.**

To purchase a bid book, please make an electronic request at: [https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/dpw-construction-projects-notice-letting\\_and\\_dpwbidopportunities@baltimorecity.gov](https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/dpw-construction-projects-notice-letting_and_dpwbidopportunities@baltimorecity.gov). For further inquiries about purchasing bid documents, please contact the assigned Contract Administrator [LWalston@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:LWalston@baltimorecity.gov)

**Principal items of work for this contract include, but are not limited to:**

Prepare as required and repave, utility cuts performed by others, with bituminous concrete or Portland cement concrete, milling and resurfacing, and installation of pavement markings, within Baltimore City streets, alleys, and roadways.

Restoration of various size and types of concrete and masonry sidewalks, replacement of concrete curb, combination curb and gutter, and monolithic medians, at various locations in Baltimore City.

The MBE goal is **30%**

The WBE goal is **15%**

APPROVED:  
Clerk, Board of Estimates

APPROVED:  
Khalil Zaied  
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30 Jan 2020 05:09  
Term: 90610112-03  
88828685  
\$5.00  
RK: AA55AA55-555AAA5A-5A55555A-AAAAA55-5A5

**Fast PLAY**

**\$5 SEVENS**  
TOP PRIZE \$57,777!

When any of YOUR NUMBERS match any of the WINNING NUMBERS, win PRIZE shown directly below.

WINNING NUMBERS  
37 2 12  
THSEV TWO TWELVE

YOUR NUMBERS

4 FOUR \$1,000 ONE THOU	21 TWONE \$15.00 FIFTH
11 ELEVEN \$75.00 SEVTH	31 THONE \$5,000 FIFTHOU

NO TOTAL PRIZE LESS THAN \$7!

081-000241-000-8-77157233-68048  
XX XXX XXXX 04:25  
Term: 90610112-03  
88828685  
\$3.00  
RK: AA55AA55-555AAA5A-5A55555A-AAAAA555-5A5

**Fast PLAY**

**\$3 LUCKY 7's SLOTS**  
TOP PRIZE \$30,000!

Match 3 identical PLAY SYMBOLS in the same SPIN, win PRIZE shown directly to the right of that SPIN. When three "7" (SEVEN) symbols appear in a VERTICAL or DIAGONAL line, win \$77 instantly! Each SPIN is played separately.

PLAY SYMBOLS PRIZE

WINNING NUMBERS  
16 12 17 9 28 11 44  
SIXTN TWELVE SEVNTN NINE TWEGT ELEVEN FRFOR

YOUR NUMBERS

14 FORTN \$30.00 THIRTY	2 TWO \$20.00 TWNTY	31 THONE \$100 ONE HUND	18 EIGHTN \$50.00 FIFTY
1 ONE \$20.00 TWNTY	23 TWTHR \$40.00 FORTY	53 FTTHR \$200 TWO HUND	30 THIRTY \$40.00 FORTY
13 THIRTN \$50.00 FIFTY	5 FIVE \$100 ONE HUND	27 TWSEV \$500 FIV HUND	42 FRTHO \$20.00 TWNTY
34 THFOR \$40.00 FORTY	41 FRONE \$500 FIV HUND	17 SEVNTN PROGRESSIVE TOP PRIZE	29 TWNIN \$1,000 ONE THOU
7 SEVEN \$0.00 TOTHOU	21 TWONE \$30.00 THIRTY	45 FRFV \$20.00 TWNTY	37 THSEV \$200 TWO HUND

**SUPER 777 BONUS**  
all 4 SUPER 777 BONUS NUMBERS

082-000241-000-8-77157233-68048  
XX XXX XXXX 04:25  
Term: 90610112-03  
88828685  
\$20.00  
RK: AA55AA55-555AAA5A-5A55555A-AAAAA555-5A5

**Fast PLAY**

**\$20 Super 777**

CURRENT PROGRESSIVE JACKPOT:  
\$200,000

Match any of YOUR NUMBERS to any of the 10 WINNING NUMBERS, win prize shown under that number.