### THE BALTIMORE TIMES

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### The Community Fridge Concept: A Strategy to Combat Food Insecurity



Valarie Matthews (left), executive director and co-founder of Catherine's Family and Youth Services Inc. and Michael Foy, executive director of the Emilie Wall Foundation, have been fighting food insecurity while partnering since 2020. Refrigerators stocked with free food are popping up around Baltimore. Elizabeth Miller, an organizer of B'More community Fridge Network, a Facebook group, connects community members with the locations of the community fridges where free food stocked by volunteers for neighbors can be found. Catherine's Community Fridge is sponsored by B'More Community Fridge and Life Bridge Health. Emilie Wall Foundation's Community Fridge is sponsored by B'More Community Fridge. Both new fridge sites recently launched in Baltimore. (See article on page 7)

Photo credit: Amanda Richardson

### 2025 AABE Energy Policy Symposium Recap

### 'Powering Forward: Innovation, Leadership & the Future of National Energy Security'

### **Submitted to The Baltimore Times**

Washington, D.C. — December 3, 2025—The American Association of Blacks in Energy (AABE) convened some of the country's most influential voices in innovation, policy, and energy leadership for the 2025 AABE Energy Policy Symposium, held at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Washington, D.C. The event, themed "Powering Forward," served as a marquee national gathering for experts, emerging talent, and policymakers committed to shaping America's energy future. A reception at Boqueria Penn Quarter closed the day, and virtual access allowed attendees across the country to participate.

### A High-Impact Convening of Thought Leaders

This year's symposium featured a distinguished lineup, including Congresswoman Yvette Clarke (D-NY); Hon. Timothy Alan Simon (Chair, AABE LIPP Committee); Harry Godfrey (Managing Director, Advanced Energy United); Dr. Nicol Turner Lee (Senior Fellow and AI ethics expert, Brookings Institution); and leaders representing Citibank, Google, Idaho National Laboratory, and Synergy Grid LLC.

Together, they explored the rapidly evolving landscape of U.S. energy innovation, reflecting AABE's mission to elevate diverse expertise and ensure the next generation of innovators includes strong representation from communities historically excluded from the sector.

### A Day of Insight, Exchange, and Collaboration

The symposium opened with "Voices & Vibes: The Morning Warm-Up," an interactive session that invited early-career professionals and innovators

to reflect on what innovation means in today's energy environment. At the same time, the invite-only Champions Breakfast hosted HBCU students, rising professionals, and mentors for a leadership conversation featuring remarks from Rep. Clarke and Greg Ellcott of ConEd.

Throughout the day, attendees participated in forward-looking sessions centered on the symposium's core themes:

### **Key Topics and Themes**

- Grid Modernization: How the nation must upgrade its infrastructure to support clean energy growth and evolving regulations.
- AI & Ethics: The expanding role of artificial intelligence in energy, including concerns around bias, transparency, data privacy, and regulatory oversight.
- Energy Security & Resilience: Climate, cyber, and geopolitical threats shaping national energy preparedness.
- Black Innovation: Celebrating historical and modern contributions of Black innovators driving the energy transition.
- Energy Justice: Ensuring equitable access to clean, affordable energy while addressing environmental justice concerns.

### **Signature Sessions**

- "Building the Grid of the Future" An examination of modernization efforts and leadership needed to strengthen U.S. energy infrastructure.
- "Future of Security in the Energy Industry" A deep dive into vulnerabilities and resilience strategies across climate, cyber, and geopolitical domains.
- "AI, Ethics & Regulation in Energy Law" – Led by Dr. Nicol Turner Lee, this session dissected the ethical

dimensions of AI in energy, highlighting accountability and emerging regulatory frameworks.

• "Sustaining America's Golden Age of Innovation" – A sweeping look at the enduring influence of Black innovators across the history and future of energy.

Curated networking experiences, including the Networking Lunch & Energy Circles, sparked cross-sector collaboration and mentoring among students, professionals, and industry leaders.

### **An Evening of Connection**

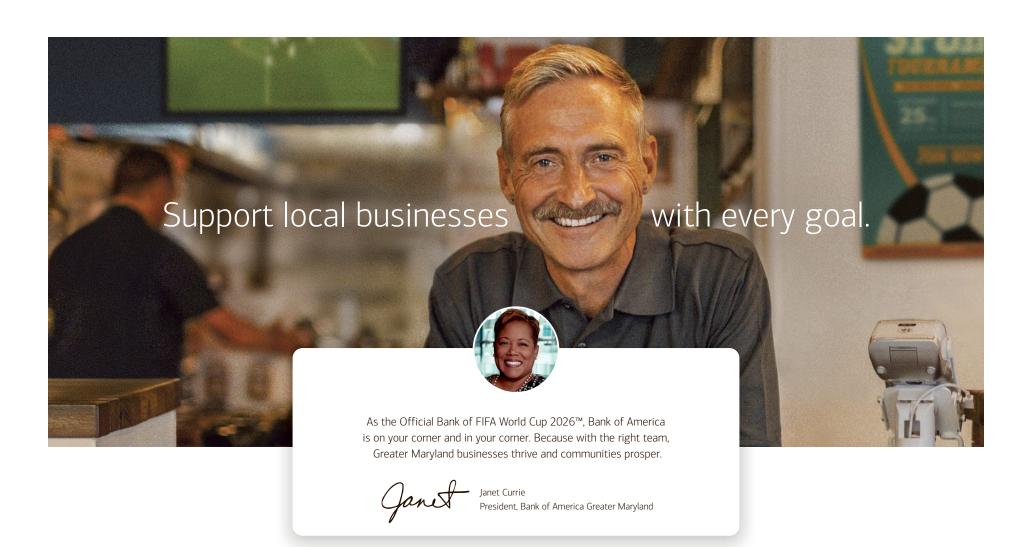
The symposium concluded with an evening reception at Boqueria Penn Quarter, offering a relaxed atmosphere

for continued dialogue, relationship building, and reflection on the day's insights.

### A Platform for Equity, Innovation, and Leadership

Ultimately, the 2025 AABE Energy Policy Symposium served as a national platform for leaders, policymakers, and innovators to confront the challenges and opportunities shaping America's energy future. With its strong emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion, the event reaffirmed AABE's commitment to ensuring that all communities benefit from the nation's evolving energy landscape.





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### Technology and You

### The Role of Cognitive Bias in the Success of Scams and Other **Cyberattacks: Part 1**

### By Karen Clay

Every day, someone is falling victim to an online scam, a bogus email, or another method used by cybercriminals to steal our identity, data, and/or money. Verizon, in its 2025 Data Breach Investigations Report covering 11/1/2023 to 10/1/2024, noted that human involvement was indicated in 60% of all cybersecurity breaches. Even the most tech savvy of us have been fooled so our level of tech knowledge does not make us immune to attack. "Why is this so?" you might ask. Depending on the way you look at it, the answer can be seen as unsettling or empowering. When we unwittingly wire money to fake tech support, click links in phishing emails, or share passwords with convincing impostors, we may afterward wonder, "How could I have been so foolish?" Well, the answer isn't related to stupidity; it's related to how our brains naturally make decisions via a concept called cognitive bias.

### What is cognitive bias?

A cognitive bias is a predictable mental shortcut your brain uses to make quick judgments and/or decisions. When we're busy, distracted, or overloaded with information, our minds often rely on fast "rules of thumb," instead of slow, careful analysis. These shortcuts help us function day to day. For example, if we see dark clouds, we grab an umbrella without checking the weather report. When someone in a uniform gives us directions, we follow them without demanding credentials. Most of the time, these shortcuts serve us well, helping us navigate a complex world efficiently, but they can also lead us to misunderstand situations, over-trust the wrong signals, or act too quickly. Think of them as your mind's autopilot. Scammers have learned

to use these mental patterns as a vector of attack against us. Their mindset is, why "hack" our computers if they can hack our attention! Cognitive bias is the reason a message can feel urgent, true, and personal even when it's completely fake.

Scammers intentionally design messages to trigger our emotions and push us into making quick decisions. Here are some of the most common biases they exploit:

1. Authority bias: We're more likely to comply with people or organizations that seem official. A scammer might impersonate our bank, our boss, the IRS, a tech support agent, or even a church leader. The message looks professional and uses familiar language. When we receive such an email, e.g., claiming to be from our bank's security department, our brain automatically defaults to compliance, and we follow the instructions without questioning them.

2. Urgency and scarcity bias: "Act now" is a scammer's favorite phrase, which can have the impact of shutting down careful thinking. A text might claim our account will be locked in 10 minutes or a package will be returned if we don't click right away. The sense of urgency triggers panic and reduces verification. When we feel rushed or pressured, we trade accuracy for speed and will fail to verify the information.



Scammers know that cognitive bias can play a big role in how you respond to scams and other cyberattacks. Graphic design by Karen Clay

**3. Loss aversion:** We don't like losing money, access, reputation, or safety; however, we enjoy gaining something. That's why "fraud alerts." "unauthorized charge" messages, and ransomware popups are so effective. The threat of loss can override our logic.

### 4. Emotion ("affect heuristic"):

Strong feelings become "evidence." Fear, excitement, shame, or even romance can short-circuit good judgment. Sextortion emails, romance scams, and investment hype ("guaranteed returns!") work because emotion narrows our focus and makes the scam feel real.

**5. Social proof:** If it looks like other people are doing something, we assume it's safe. Fake reviews, copied social posts, and "everyone is joining this platform" messages are built to create herd confidence and reel us in.

**6. Reciprocity:** When someone does something for us, even something we didn't request, we feel compelled to return the favor. That's why scammers offer "free virus scans" or "complimentary account reviews." Once



Karen Clav Courtesy photo

they've "helped" us, asking for remote access or payment information feels reasonable.

7. Commitment and consistency: Scammers often start small: "Confirm your email," "verify this code," "fill out this form" are common tactics. Once we take the first step, we're more likely to keep going, even if things start to feel off, because our brain wants to stay consistent.

The most sophisticated scams combine multiple biases in one communication. Imagine receiving an urgent text from your "bank" about suspicious activity, asking you to click a link to verify your identity. That message hits authority bias, urgency, and your existing fear of fraud. It creates a psychological "perfect storm" which may feel challenging to avoid.

While this may seem overwhelming and near impossible to address, there are steps we can take to limit our vulnerability to these scams. Stay tuned for Part 2, when we will reveal them!







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### Celebrate the Holidays!

### **Baltimore Public Markets Bring Holiday Magic** to Families Across the City



Lexington Market rendering. Courtesy of Baltimore Public Markets Corporation

BALTIMORE, MD—Baltimore Public Markets are ushering in the holiday season with a lineup of joyful, family-focused events across the city. From gingerbread decorating to breakfast with the Grinch, markets are becoming festive gathering spaces that celebrate community, creativity, and the spirit of giving.

As one of the oldest continuously operating public market systems in the country, Baltimore Public Markets have always served as neighborhood anchors. This tradition continues today through programs that support local merchants, uplift families, and strengthen Baltimore's vibrant communities.

### A Season of Giving: Nourish the Neighborhood

Recently, Baltimore Public Markets hosted the 2nd Annual Nourish the **Neighborhood** at Lexington Market—an extraordinary demonstration of community

Together with merchants, partners, and volunteers, the event:

- Served over 600 meals
- Provided free haircuts
- Distributed hundreds of toiletry packages

• Created a welcoming holiday moment for families across Baltimore

The event was a powerful reminder of how meaningful community collaboration can be, especially during the holiday season.

### **Upcoming Holiday Events at the** Markets Oh, Snap! It's a Gingerbread Party - Hollins Market Saturday, December 13, 2025

Hollins Market kicks off the holiday festivities with a hands-on gingerbread cookie decorating party for children and families. Guests can enjoy music, crafts, and a festive afternoon designed to spark creativity and joy.

### How the Grinch Stole Breakfast -**Broadway Market**

Saturday, December 13, 2025 — 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

Families are encouraged to arrive in their coziest pajamas for this whimsical, pajamafriendly breakfast experience. Kids can meet the Grinch, enjoy a festive meal, and dive into a morning full of storybook magic.

### Pictures with Santa - Northeast Market

Saturday, December 20, 2025

Northeast Market welcomes families for free holiday photos with Santa, complete with treats and a warm, festive atmosphere. It's the perfect chance to capture cherished memories without the typical holiday hustle.

### Joy Baltimore Toy Distribution -**Lexington Market**

Saturday, December 20, 2025

Later the same day, Lexington Market will host Joy Baltimore's **3rd Annual Toy** Distribution, bringing more than 200 toys to children in the community. This beloved tradition ensures that joy and generosity reach families across Baltimore during the holiday season.

### Celebrate the Season at Baltimore **Public Markets**

With festive programming, communitycentered events, and a proud legacy of service, Baltimore Public Markets continue to shine as welcoming spaces for all Baltimoreans. This month's holiday lineup offers something special for every family and reminds us of the power of tradition, togetherness, and giving back.

For more information about Baltimore Public Markets, visit:

https://baltimoremarkets.org/









5

### From Tulsa to Ghana, Mother Fletcher's Long Journey Comes to a Close at 111

**By Stacy M. Brown**Black Press USA Senior National
Correspondent

Mother Viola Fletcher, who carried the memory of Tulsa's shame and the nation's unfinished business longer than any other living soul, died on November 24 at age 111. She stood as the oldest known survivor of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, the burning of Greenwood, and the attempted erasure of Black prosperity that white mobs tried to silence forever. Tulsa Mayor Monroe Nichols said her death marks a moment of mourning for a city still learning how to reckon with its own truth. "Today, our city mourns the loss of Mother Viola Fletcher, a survivor of one of the darkest chapters in our city's history," Nichols stated. "Mother Fletcher endured more than anyone should, yet she spent her life lighting a path forward with purpose."

She spent that long life fighting for justice that too many leaders tried to bury along with the bodies from Black Wall Street. In Greenwood, she was a child watching terror reshape a world that had promised her nothing but possibility. For more than a century, she bore witness so the country could never again pretend not to know. "Her legacy will be carried forward with the courage and conviction she modeled every day of her life," Nichols said.

Mother Fletcher's mission reached the halls of Congress when she demanded reparations for survivors and descendants of the massacre. She testified with a steadiness that shamed a nation still unwilling to repair what it helped set ablaze. She reminded lawmakers she had lived through state-sponsored violence and had lived long enough to see the excuses that followed. She co-authored



Mother Viola Fletcher Photo courtesy of nnpa.org/Getty-Images

her memoir "Don't Let Them Bury My Story" with her grandson, refusing to allow America the comfort of forgetting.

She left her words in the archives of Oklahoma State University through oral histories that insisted history would not escape the sound of her voice. Her labor began early. During World War II, she worked in a shipyard as an assistant welder. Later, she cleaned houses with a determination that carried her well into her eighties. She built a life out of the ashes she was never meant to rise from.

The world took notice of her strength. During a 2021 journey to Ghana, she received the title "NaaLamiley," translated as someone strong enough to stand the test of time. Her vision inspired the Viola Ford Fletcher Foundation, which promotes education, health, and economic opportunity. Community

members honored her in ways large and small, including the gift of custom dentures created to recognize her legacy and impact.

Three years ago, she stood with her brother, Hughes Van Ellis, known as Uncle Red, inside Ghana's embassy in Washington. She was 108 then. He was 101. Both were sworn in as citizens of Ghana in a ceremony filled with music, dancing children, and the full weight of ancestral return. It was the first time anyone had been sworn in as a citizen inside the Ghanaian embassy. "I'm so grateful to all. I thank you so much for this honor," Fletcher said before signing her citizenship papers. Her brother echoed her sentiment. "I'm so thankful to Ghana, and all of you," Ellis stated.

Oklahoma State Rep. Regina Goodwin attended the ceremony, along with

journalist Tiffany Cross and Ambassador Erieka Bennett. Bennett spoke of heritage that surpasses borders. "You don't have to be born in Africa to be an African," Bennett declared. "Africa is born in you."

Cross spoke of feeling the presence of ancestors moving through the room, a presence made sharper by the endurance of Fletcher and Ellis. Goodwin said their lives proved that the African spirit cannot be broken. "This is what it's all about," Cross stated. "The spirit of Africa, its powerful and rich history."

Their citizenship ceremony became more than a celebration. It became a reminder that the diaspora carries stories the world still needs to hear, and that the road home is long but never closed. Bennett told the gathering that Ghana opens its doors to all who seek connection. "Welcome home," she said.

### **Volunteers and Nonprofits Collaborate to Fight Hunger**

### The Community Fridge Concept: A Strategy to Combat Food Insecurity

### **By Andrea Blackstone**

The Maryland Food Bank (MFB) reported that based on MFB's Maryland Hunger Map analysis, approximately two million Marylanders may face hunger in 2025 (https://mdfoodbank.org/hunger-inmaryland/whats-at-stake/). What happens when food banks are closed or hungry people lack transportation to access them?

### **Grassroot Solutions: Community** Fridges

An increasing number of public refrigerators known as "community fridges," can be found on sidewalks from the West Coast to the East Coast to improve access to food for hungry people in need. Freedge.org https://freedge. org/freedge-yourself) provides advice on starting a community fridge in your neighborhood and information on where to locate a "community freedge" listed in their database. The concept is growing as food insecurity expands and deepens.

### **Catherine's Community Fridge**

Locally, the mission of CFYS is to help improve the quality of life for all the residents living in Northwest Baltimore City and the surrounding areas. Valarie Matthews, executive director and cofounder of Catherine's Family and Youth Services Inc. (CFYS), shared that Catherine's Community Fridge was launched in the Park Heights community at a grand opening and CFYS's 11th Annual Thanksgiving Distribution on November 24, 2025. Catherine's Community Fridge can be found at 2835 Virginia Avenue in Baltimore, Maryland 21215, at the parking lot side of Park Heights Academy. It is hosted where CFYS operates its free youth development programs and monthly food/diaper distribution.

"Catherine's Community Fridge is an initiative that was launched as a collaborative effort with LifeBridge

Health to improve health, wellness, and food access. The Community Fridge model was a partnership with Bmore Community Fridge Network. LifeBridge Health plans to be on site regularly during monthly food distribution to offer access to quality health care, supportive services, free health screenings, vaccinations, healthy eating initiatives, and more," said Matthews.

The location in Park Heights provides food access to students, families, and neighbors when CFYS's pantry is closed.

"Catherine's door is always open to anyone in need of food. We ask that children, families and neighbors leave Catherine's Community Fridge clear of trash, take only what they need, and leave something for someone else," Matthews stated.

She further explained that fresh produce; pre-made ready-to-eat meals such as soups; salads; sandwiches; frozen vegetables/meats; nonperishable foods; baby food; drinks; and baked goods are typically stocked in the fridge/pantry area. Catherine's Community Fridge is filled three times daily, typically in the morning, around lunchtime, and at the last drop-off, often completed after 5 p.m.

"A small grocery bag is typically what families can fill up so that someone else has access to food as well," Matthews explained. "It's designed to be here when you need a little help with a meal."

### The Emilie Wall Foundation's **Community Fridge**

Michael Foy, executive director of the Emilie Wall Foundation, leads a community-based nonprofit organization serving Baltimore residents through emergency food distribution, youth development programs, and annual community events. The nonprofit's mission is to empower families, reduce food insecurity, and provide supportive spaces for youth.

The Emilie Wall Foundation's



Catherine's Community Fridge, located at 2835 Virginia Avenue in Baltimore, Maryland 21215.

Community Fridge is another free, local, publicly accessible refrigerator and pantry that provides fresh food, healthy produce, and essential items to Baltimore residents in need.

"Operated in partnership with local organizations and community volunteers, the Community Fridge serves as a judgment-free resource where individuals and families can take what they need-no paperwork, no eligibility requirements, and no questions asked," Foy stated.

Located in Northwest Baltimore at 5221 Florence Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21215, the fridge is stocked regularly with fruits, vegetables, dairy, beverages, prepared meals, and shelf-stable goods.

"Its purpose is to help reduce food insecurity, minimize waste, and ensure families have reliable access to nutritious food between larger distribution events," said Foy.

He noted that The Emilie Wall Foundation's Community Fridge launch date was November 30, 2025.

"In 2025, the Foundation installed a community fridge in partnership with the Bmore Community Fridge Network to increase food access to essential resources for underserved households 24/7," said

Stocked food comes from residents



Students from Park Heights Academy stop by Catherine's Community Fridge to take food home after school. Photos by Valarie Matthews

and local food banks. Target users are residents who are facing food insecurity and people who are less fortunate. Donations to help keep this effort of neighbors helping neighbors going can be made through Venmo, PayPal, or by mailing donations to 5221 Florence Ave, Baltimore, Maryland 21215.

"The Community Fridge reflects the Emilie Wall Foundation's commitment to grassroots support, dignity, and community empowerment. By creating a space where neighbors can help neighbors, the foundation continues the legacy of service inspired by Monique Wall—promoting generosity, reducing hunger, and strengthening Baltimore one meal at a time.

Learn more about CFYS via www. catherinesfamilyandyouthservices. org and donate by visiting https:// www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted button id=OJW5MJS57A2B2. The Emilie Wall Foundation's website is www.emiliewallfoundation.org. Find Bmore Community Fridge Network on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/ groups/642135508518868.







### \$19 Million in Expanded Grow-Your-Own Educators Grant Program Awards

### Governor Moore Unveils Major Initiatives to Strengthen Maryland's Teacher Workforce and Support Young Men and Boys

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Governor Wes Moore announced a sweeping set of new initiatives aimed at building a stronger, more diverse teacher workforce in Maryland—while simultaneously uplifting young men and boys across the state. The announcement marks one of the Moore-Miller Administration's most significant investments yet in educator recruitment, retention, and long-term workforce stability.

At the center of the initiative is the launch of \$19 million in expanded Grow-Your-Own Educators Grant Program awards, designed to help non-licensed school staff transition into full-time classroom teachers. These grants will support paraprofessionals, classroom aides, and other school support professionals who already serve within Maryland schools but need financial and academic support to become certified educators.

The impact of the administration's efforts is already visible. **Teacher vacancies have dropped nearly 50 percent in the past year**—from 1,619 openings in the 2024–25 school year to 886 in 2025–26.

"Through our strategic investments, Maryland has cut the teacher shortage in half—but we still have work to do," Gov. Moore said. "Today, we accelerate our push to close the educator shortage by leveraging an untapped resource in our state: Maryland's young men and boys. By making the choice to invest in our educators and our schools, our administration is helping every educator pursue their dream of teaching and inspiring the next generation."

Prioritizing Male Educators to Strengthen Classrooms and Communities

A distinctive feature of this year's Grow-Your-Own awards is a new priority consideration for programs that present strong plans to recruit and retain **male educators**, who make up only **23 percent** of Maryland teachers. Increasing male representation—especially Black and Brown men—has long been linked to stronger academic outcomes, social-emotional development, and mentorship for students.

Governor Moore emphasized that schools are not just places of learning—they are also spaces where boys and young men build identity, self-esteem, and purpose. By increasing representation in the teaching profession, the administration aims to support those developmental needs more intentionally.

"These initiatives will help Maryland recruit and retain the excellent teachers our students deserve," said State Superintendent Dr. Carey M. Wright. "We are building a stronger, more resilient educator workforce."

### New Partnership to Support Men and Boys Across Maryland

The governor also announced a major three-year partnership between the Young Men and Boys Initiative within the Governor's Office of Children and the American Institutes for Research (AIR). Through a memorandum of understanding, AIR will provide research and technical assistance to strengthen statewide strategies supporting men and boys—backed by \$6 million in philanthropic funding from the AIR Opportunity Fund.

"Teacher shortages and the need for more men in the classroom are real—and solvable," said Dr. Rashawn



Governor Wes Moore
Official Portrait

Ray, Executive Director of the AIR Opportunity Fund. "This partnership represents Maryland at its best—leaders, educators, families, and research partners pulling in the same direction."

### Part of a Larger Workforce Push

The Grow-Your-Own expansion is just one piece of the Moore-Miller Administration's broader agenda to stabilize the education workforce.

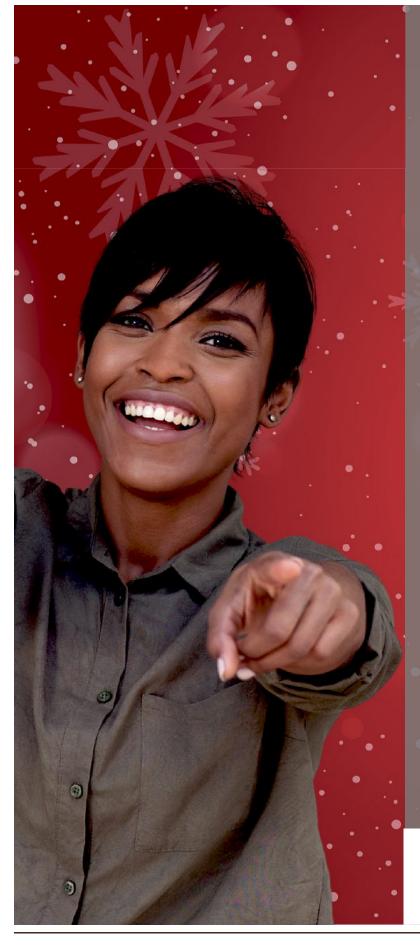
Recent efforts include:

- Feds to Eds Initiative— offering pathways for federal workers impacted by layoffs to transition into teaching.
  - Maryland's first registered

apprenticeship program for teaching— creating a paid, earn-as-you-learn track into the classroom.

- Teacher Quality and Diversity Grant Program— distributing \$1 million to strengthen and diversify teacher preparation pipelines.
- A new partnership with Teach. org— boosting Maryland's national recruitment reach.

Together, these initiatives aim not only to fill vacancies but also to build a workforce that reflects the diversity, creativity, and potential of Maryland's students.



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The Chief of the Transportation and Construction Engineering Division, designee of the Director of the Baltimore City Department of Transportation, will be in his office, Room 500 Charles L. Benton Jr. Building, 417 E. Fayette Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202 on December 19, 2025 from 10:00 A.M. until 12:00 noon for the purpose of hearing and considering protest and to explain matters in connection with re-establishing the grade of the following private streets and alleys as shown in the plans for Developer's Agreement No.1793C

This includes:

Private Alley 'H' constructed from Station 0+00 to Station 1+39.58. Private Alley 'I' constructed from Station 0+00 to Station 3+55.97. Private Alley 'J' constructed from Station 0+00 to Station 1+39.58.

Bimal Devkota P.E., Chief Transportation Engineering and Construction Division

Veronica P. McBeth, Director Department of Transportation Publish: December 12, 2025

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## It's all about the Children

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**Henderson-Hopkins Elementary School** 

2100 Ashland Ave. Balt, MD 21205

Doors open at 5:45 pm

Program begins at 6:00 pm

This year's celebration features the premiere of the Voices of History Youth Ensemble, directed by Marcia Sellers of PowerFTP, along with performances by the **Community of Academic Scholars** and Keur Khaleyi Kids.

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