

Town of Bladensburg

Council Members

Ward 1

Trina Brown

Kalisha Dixon



Council Members

Ward 2

Marilyn Blount

Carrol McBryde

Mayor

Takisha James

February 18, 2026

Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Delegate Jessica M. Feldmark
Vice-Chair, House Ways and Means
Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for House Bill 1142 — Establishing a Task Force to Modernize County and Municipal Revenue Structures

Dear Chair Wilkins and Vice-Chair Feldmark:

Good afternoon. My name is Takisha D. James, and I serve as Mayor of the Town of Bladensburg. I am also honored to serve as President-Elect of the Maryland Municipal League (MML). On behalf of our approximately 9,660 residents, and the nearly 12,000 to 13,000 individuals who live and work in our immediate municipal area, I respectfully urge your support for House Bill 1142, which would establish a Task Force to Modernize County and Municipal Revenue Structures.

Modernizing a 60-Year-Old Revenue Framework

Maryland's municipal revenue structure has remained largely unchanged for more than **60 years**, even as technology, infrastructure, governance practices, and economic development frameworks have evolved substantially. Yet the core framework governing how municipalities generate and receive revenues has not undergone a comprehensive review in that time. MML recognizes this need and has worked collaboratively with municipalities across the State to initiate discussions about the structural challenges that our communities face.

This prolonged stagnation limits the fiscal tools available to small municipalities like Bladensburg. A structured evaluation through the Task Force envisioned in House Bill 1142 represents a necessary and overdue first step toward aligning our revenue framework with modern economic realities and ensuring fiscal sustainability.

Overreliance on Property Taxes

Bladensburg, like many small towns, relies predominantly on local property taxes to fund essential services. This dependence creates a disproportionate burden on our residents, who also pay county taxes. Although limited mechanisms exist to address duplicative services, they are insufficient to meaningfully offset the structural imbalance faced by smaller municipalities.

This dynamic contributes to reduced fiscal flexibility, increased pressure to raise local property tax rates; and diminished capacity to absorb inflationary pressures and escalating service delivery costs. In today's economic climate—marked by rising costs and heightened expectations for municipal services—continuing to depend almost exclusively on property tax revenue is unsustainable.

Need for Shared and Direct Revenue Mechanisms

Municipalities need access to modern, diversified revenue tools, including structured revenue-sharing options with the State. At present, municipalities often rely on competitive grants or indirect funding streams to supplement operations and infrastructure. While these mechanisms provide intermittent relief, they:

- Are episodic rather than stable;
- Limit local autonomy; and
- Do not provide predictable operational funding.

A modernized revenue system that includes more direct and reliable funding allocations would enable municipalities to plan responsibly, invest strategically, and deliver consistent services to residents.

Capturing the Visitor Economy

Bladensburg functions both as a through-corridor to our Nation's Capital and as a destination community within Prince George's County. We host:

- Historic sites such as Bostwick House, the Battle of Bladensburg Memorial, the Peace Cross, and other heritage landmarks;
- Regional park facilities including Bladensburg Waterfront Park;
- Arts festivals, regional celebrations, and community gatherings; and
- Regional recreational events.

Visitors utilize our roads, parks, police services, and public spaces. However, municipalities like ours often lack mechanisms to capture a meaningful share of the economic activity generated by tourism and pass-through traffic. Modern revenue structures should consider equitable participation in the visitor economy that places demand on local infrastructure and services.

Urban-Suburban Realities

As an inner-Beltway municipality in an urban-suburban county, Bladensburg confronts compounded challenges including, aging infrastructure, need for enhanced public safety resources, historic disinvestment, high resident service demands, and a limited commercial tax base.

The constraints we experience are structural rather than managerial. A statewide review facilitated by this Task Force would allow policymakers to examine these realities comprehensively and recommend practical, common-sense updates.

Local Flexibility is Essential

House Bill 1142 does not mandate tax increases. It establishes a thoughtful review process. Municipal leaders need:

- Expanded fiscal tools;
- Greater local flexibility; and
- Revenue structures aligned with modern service delivery.

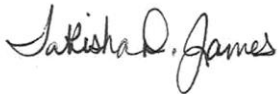
As Mayor for more than five years, a Board member of MML, and as a resident of Bladensburg, I can attest that it is increasingly difficult to provide adequate services under the current revenue framework. The financial constraints faced by municipal governments are real and growing.

House Bill 1142 represents a prudent and necessary first step towards evaluating outdated revenue systems; reducing overreliance on property taxes; strengthening municipal sustainability; and promoting equity between State, county, and municipal fiscal structures.

I respectfully request that the House Ways and Means Committee give a **favorable** consideration to this important legislation.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and continued service to Maryland residents.

Sincerely,



Takisha D. James
Mayor, Town of Bladensburg