

REMARKS (as prepared)
Prince George's County Council Chair Calvin S. Hawkins, II
Gavel Exchange Ceremony – Prince George's County Council Hearing Room
Tuesday, December 6, 2022

Good morning! I am thankful to God and for the support of my family as I am ushered into this moment. We have come to the close of Legislative Year 2022, and my highly privileged tenure as leader of this eminent body.

The confidence of my colleagues in my leadership ability is humbling. I have been richly blessed to serve the great people of Prince George's County, and for the second consecutive year, to serve as Council Chair.

My call to leadership came at a time of great challenge in our County, but I can say with pride that this Council has remained focused on serving the people, ensuring that Prince George's County continues to be a place of hope and opportunity.

My deepest appreciation to former Council Members Deni Taveras, Dannielle Glaros, Todd Turner, Derrick Leon Davis, Rodney Streeter, Monique Anderson-Walker and Johnathon Medlock, who jumped right in after he was appointed to the Council District 6 seat to fulfill an unexpired term.

Their contributions to this body have been immeasurable, and I have no doubt that our work together will be foundational to achieving the promise of Prince George's County.

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I also want to thank my colleagues who served with me in the previous term and now return to the Council as we serve second terms together – Council Members Tom Dernoga, Jolene Ivey, Sydney Harrison, and Mel Franklin.

Council Member Ed Burroughs, we welcome you back as well to serve your first full term following your Special Election victory to also fill an unexpired term.

I thank each of you for your partnership and support.

As one chapter closes and another begins, it is my privilege to welcome our new colleagues to the dais – Council Members Wanika Fisher, Ingrid Harrison, Wala Blegay, and Krystal Oriadha. There is also a familiar face rejoining us, Council Member Eric Olson – welcome back! We look forward to your energy and new ideas!

I must pause for a moment to recognize my remarkable leadership partner, Vice-Chair and District 9 Council Member Sydney Harrison. I want everyone to know just how much I appreciate your partnership and steadfast support. Please join me in a round of grateful applause for the impactful contributions of Legislative Year 2022 Vice Chair Sydney Harrison.

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This past year's legislative agenda included Council consideration of several critical projects, initiatives, and measures.

While we did not always agree, I welcome every spirited debate, and I remain proud of all this Council was able to accomplish in its deliberations. Passionate in our pursuit for positive change and committed to enhancing the quality of life for our residents, we worked to support businesses and nonprofits, create economic sustainability and viability, secure our neighborhoods, encourage healthier communities, and engage our citizens in Council processes.

Just yesterday, guided by our shared passion for Prince George's County and her people, we took the Oath of Office and affirmed our commitment to work on behalf **OF THE PEOPLE** of Prince George's County.

I once heard it said, ***"There is great strength in unity. Where there is teamwork and collaboration, greatness can be achieved."***

I strongly agree and look forward to our work together as the great story of Prince George's County continues to unfold.

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During the Council's Annual Retreat, held virtually in January of this year, we unified to share our concerns, discuss the common issues, and set our priorities for Legislative Year 2022:

- Building stronger relations with collaborative partnerships
- Creating tools for economic stability and growth
- Producing a budget strategy to address our post-pandemic economy
- Enhancing the Council's oversight role and exercise our Charter responsibilities
- Maximizing transparency in Council processes; and
- Presenting a more unified, informed legislative body

During the height of the COVID pandemic, we suspended conducting our work through Council committees, but in Legislative Year 2022, we resumed budget work sessions through the Council's committee structure. I commend the thoughtful work of our Council committee leadership, members, and staff, who were able to pivot whenever necessary.

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Council Member Mel Franklin and former Council Member Dannielle Glaros, our Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee Chair and Vice-Chair, hit the ground running. Committee members worked to set the framework for the enactment of legislation supporting the 2023 Annual Action Plan for Housing and Community Development, reflecting the County's most critical housing and community development needs. Legislation addressing affordable housing, landlord-tenant concerns, and loopholes allowing a saturation of convenience stores and gas stations were also addressed in this committee. A job well done!

Our thanks to Education, Workforce, and Development Committee Chair Jolene Ivey, assisted by former Council Member and Committee Vice-Chair Deni Taveras on several committee achievements this past year, to include legislation confirming the recommendations of the Blue Print Schools Task Force for Phase II of this unique and historic public-private partnership, along with a timely and necessary briefing concerning young people and violence in our communities.

Council Vice-Chair Sydney Harrison and Council Member Tom Dernoga served as Health, Human Services and Public Safety Committee Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively. In some of our most critical committee work this year, members addressed public safety and community trust in law enforcement by setting the foundation for our Police Accountability Board and a public engagement process

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for the selection of its members. A special thank you to our residents, key partners in this process.

The Council's Government Operations and Fiscal Policy committee members addressed diversity and equity in publicly subsidized development projects. Legislation establishing a Business Startup Personal Property Tax Credit; a Northern Gateway Improvement District; expanded equity in local procurement opportunities also moved successfully through this committee. There was good news for our seniors as well, with the establishment of a 20-percent Senior Property Tax Credit, initiated by my District 8 colleague Edward Burroughs. Thank you, Committee Chair Edward Burroughs and Committee Vice-Chair Mel Franklin for outstanding work.

The tireless efforts of our Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committee resulted in a name change for the Largo Town Center Metrorail to "Downtown Largo." Additionally, working through this committee, the Council joined our County Executive in urging the Federal Public Building Reform Board to support the transfer of certain properties to federal agencies rather than dispose of them through public sale – a win-win for Prince George's County. Thank you, former Council Members Rodney Streeter and Todd Turner, Committee Chair and Vice-Chair for your leadership.

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Looking back over the past year, we achieved much as a body – continuing to push for the relocation of the FBI headquarters to Prince George's County; adopting a record \$5 billion County Budget; implementing the new modernized Zoning regulations, the County's first update of our zoning laws in over 50 years, which took effect this spring....and so much more! Again, my thanks to the Council's committee leadership and members, supported by very able and talented Legislative Branch staff.

Acknowledgements

As public servants, we are supported in our work by the love and sacrifice of our families. I am personally grateful to my wife, Angie, whose love and support continues to sustain me.

Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks, you are an extraordinary leader for these extraordinary times. You have established a robust spirit of cooperation between the Executive and Legislative branches of government and our citizens can claim the benefit. As we emerge from a time of immense challenge, it is a testament to your leadership that we are and will remain **Prince George's County Strong!**

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Without a doubt our citizens are getting more involved in the legislative process. I want to take a moment to thank every stakeholder in Prince George's County who took the time to respectfully and in order, weigh in on the issues before this Council. The concerns this year were big and complex, and citizen participation ensures these issues are fully discussed and understood.

We cannot successfully address constituent concerns without the selfless, unwavering support of our office team members. Kudos to each of you, especially my own office staff, for great teamwork. We couldn't get any of it done without you. I am eternally thankful for your prayers, support, and volunteerism.

To Council Administration, and the Legislative Branch team who support our work, under the strong and able leadership of Administrator Robert Williams, Deputy Administrator William Hunt, and Associate Administrator Colette Gresham, you are the best of the best! Working through some tough and oftentimes, uncertain circumstances – we never see you sweat! Thank you for your leadership, guidance, and sage wisdom.

And I want to personally thank our Clerk, Donna Brown – for just about EVERYTHING!

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Conclusion

We are **Prince George's Proud** of every achievement in the past year, and as I pass the gavel to our new Council leadership team, we are keenly aware of the challenges that remain. This new Council is up to the task, and I remain optimistic for an even brighter future for our County.

Please indulge me for a moment to provide encouragement for the journey ahead. Each of us, all of us, are here today because of the love and support of others - this is my story.

I am the blessed beneficiary of loved ones who provided me with unwavering support as I journeyed through the troubling waters of recovery – a living example of redemption and restoration.

Growing up in the Oxon Hill community of Glassmanor, the product of a single-family home; a teenage parent; and a formerly incarcerated person, the odds were not in my favor, but His Grace and Mercy find me here today – a public servant of the people and for the people. I am humbled, and deeply grateful by the opportunity we work every day to provide to every Prince Georgian.

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As we begin this work together, let us be guided by our faith and steadfast in our pursuit to “do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.”

Thank you for the opportunity to be in your service. God bless you and God Bless Prince George's County

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