



# August 2024 News

Carmel Roques | Secretary  
Jennifer Crawley | Deputy Secretary

## Message from Secretary Roques



People are living longer and healthier, and older people are becoming a larger share of Maryland's total population. Currently, 1 in 4 people are 50 years and older. By 2050, 1 in 3 people will make up the 50+ population.

As the number of consumers, workers, caregivers, and volunteers continues to climb, Maryland benefits by encouraging older workers to stay in the workforce longer. Today's 50+ workforce is tomorrow's 60+ workforce, and this demographic offers tremendous value to Maryland's economic landscape.

Marylanders aged 50 and older contributed 38% of our state's taxes and 39% of the state's GDP in 2018 – percentages expected to increase to 42% and 43% respectively by 2050. That's about \$487 billion the 50+ population will contribute to the state's GDP in 2050, accounting for 60% of all money spent in Maryland, according to the [AARP Longevity Economy Outlook](#) for Maryland.

In a few short years, older workers will represent more than a quarter of our labor force, bringing much-needed experience, emotional intelligence, and generational diversity to our workplaces. Despite these benefits, societal age discrimination continues to stifle economic growth and impact the overall health and well-being of older people.

To address these challenges and maximize the benefits and opportunities of an aging society, the Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) is working to create and implement an actionable multisector plan on aging, Longevity Ready Maryland (LRM), with a goal of promoting an age-inclusive workforce.

If you value a strong and effective labor force, please provide your input on the current state of age inclusion, sentiments toward intergenerational teams, and the experiences of workers as it relates to age by filling out [this survey from the Center for Workforce Inclusion](#). To learn more about LRM and our department's epic goals, go to [LRM.Maryland.Gov](#).

## Plain Language Improves Accessibility





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## Plain Language Improves Accessibility



In honor of the 34th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Governor Wes Moore signed an executive order creating the Maryland Plain Language Initiative to ensure communications from every State agency are accessible to all Marylanders.

"This Executive Order is based on a simple idea: It shouldn't have to be so difficult for Marylanders to access the programs and services they need," said Gov. Moore. "Our administration's Plain Language Initiative will help ensure that every piece of writing that comes out of our administration – in print and online – is simple, accessible, and easy to read. This is what it looks like to leave no one behind."

MDOA has begun the work of using plain language to serve our residents in partnership with the University of Maryland School of Public Health [Horowitz Center for Health Literacy](#). Over the past year, MDOA has worked with the Horowitz Center to evaluate and update our website content to be more user-friendly and implement best practices in plain language standards.

"Plain language makes state government more accessible for all Marylanders, including those with disabilities, allowing them to participate in meaningful ways," said Maryland Department of Disabilities Secretary Carol A. Beatty. "Technical terms and government jargon don't help people get needed services. Plain language does."

Visit our website, [Aging.Maryland.Gov](#), to see our redesigned home page and updated internal content. Read more about the Governor's executive order at <https://governor.maryland.gov/news/press/pages/governor-moore-signs-executive-order-creating-maryland-plain-language-initiative.aspx>.

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## HoCo Area Agency on Aging Receives \$1.1 Million for Home Modifications



The Howard County Office on Aging and Independence has been awarded a \$1.1 million grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to support critical home modifications for older adults in need of accessibility upgrades.

"I commend the Howard County Office on Aging and Independence and HUD for their commitment to accommodating the changing needs of our aging population and supporting aging-in-place efforts so residents can remain independent in their community of choice," said MDOA Secretary Carmel Roques. "One of the goals of the state's multisector plan for aging, Longevity Ready Maryland, is to help Marylanders prepare for longer, healthier lives. Addressing the need for affordable, accessible, and more livable housing helps achieve that goal."

[The Howard County Office on Aging and Independence](#) – one of 19 [Area Agencies on Aging](#) funded in part by MDOA – will use the funds to expand its Community Living Program to implement a wider range of home modifications so more older adults can live comfortably and securely in their own homes.

Strategic partners include [Rebuilding Together Howard County](#) and other nonprofits serving the Howard County community.

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## Technology First: Power Up Your Life!





## Power Up Your Life!

 August 27, 2024  9:30a.m. - 4p.m.

 The Meeting House  
5885 Robert Oliver Place, Columbia, MD 21045

MDOA will be hosting a booth at the upcoming **Technology First: Power Up Your Life!** event to highlight *Maryland Equips*, a collaboration between MDOA and the Maryland Department of Disabilities to provide free medical equipment and assistive technology to Marylanders with any disability, illness, or injury.

Products currently available through Maryland Equips include wheelchairs, power scooters, speech communication devices, bathroom chairs and railing, adapted computer equipment and telephones, home hospital beds, mechanical lifts, magnifiers, and eye-gaze systems, among other adaptive products that help people who need additional support remain comfortable, connected, and independent in their communities.

In addition to showcasing equipment offered through MDOA's Durable Medical Equipment Re-Use program, attendees at the event can apply for medical equipment and learn more about participating in the program.

Sponsored by the Developmental Disabilities Administration, **Technology First: Power Up Your Life!** takes place on August 27 from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Meeting House in Columbia, Maryland (5885 Robert Oliver Place). The vendor room will be open from 2:30 to 4 p.m. and will also highlight unique smart home technology that may help promote independent living.

There is no charge, however [registration is recommended](#). For more information about the equipment offered through Maryland Equips, visit [Aging.Maryland.Gov/MarylandEquips](https://Aging.Maryland.Gov/MarylandEquips).

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## MDOA Funds Aging In Place Efforts in Underserved Communities



MDOA has awarded \$100,000 in grants to support aging in place efforts led by six Maryland Villages in historically underserved communities. The grants are offered annually as part of Longevity Ready Maryland's efforts to help local organizations provide high-quality services, improve collaboration between agencies and organizations, and foster social connection across generations.

"We know the majority of people want to live in the communities they've called home and invested in for years, maintaining their independence and dignity," said MDOA Secretary Carmel Roques. "These grants will support local efforts to enhance engagement and support Marylanders in their communities, especially in areas that face additional challenges and barriers to living healthier and longer lives."

Villages are grassroots organizations where neighbors help neighbors by providing comprehensive support such as transportation, meal delivery, home maintenance, and social activities through member-driven volunteer efforts. One of this year's recipients, [HomePorts Village](#) in Kent County, plans to use part of its \$27,150 to fund a volunteer coordinator who will work to rebuild, revitalize, and bring on new members and volunteers to serve the needs of residents in their rural community.

"For many older residents living here, we are their only resource for transportation to doctor's appointments, pharmacies, and grocery stores," said HomePorts Executive Director Jeanette Jeffrey. "We also plan to increase our friendly home visits to help prevent isolation, a common problem in rural areas."

To learn more about MDOA's Supportive Communities and Aging in Place initiatives, visit [Aging.Maryland.Gov](https://Aging.Maryland.Gov). For more information on Longevity Ready Maryland, visit [LRM.Maryland.Gov](https://LRM.Maryland.Gov).

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## Senior Center Without Walls Bridges Gaps

MDOA has awarded \$34,000 to Harford County to help fund the BLOOM Project – Building Longevity Outreach on the Move.

BLOOM connects older adults who live in affordable community housing to on-site health promotion programming and congregate meals, conveniently providing increased social engagement and offering residents additional supports and services.

“This ‘senior center without walls’ bridges the gap between older adults with limited resources and the benefits of traditional brick-and-mortar senior centers,” said Harford County Executive Bob Cassilly. “By bringing engaging programs directly to residents, the BLOOM Project addresses health, nutrition, and socialization issues often faced by lower-income residents in Harford County.”

Harford, Caroline, Cecil, and Worcester counties were awarded \$100,000 in competitive funds through the FY25 Senior Center Operating Fund (SCOF) for innovative programs that serve historically underserved rural communities. MDOA allocated an additional \$650,000 in funds to support critical operating needs for senior centers across the state based on the number of Marylanders aged 60 and older who live in each county. To learn more about the SCOF awards, visit [Aging.Maryland.Gov](https://www.maryland.gov/aging).

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## August is National Immunization Awareness Month



As parents rush to vaccinate their school-aged children for the upcoming school year, it's important to note that older adults also need to stay up to date on immunizations as well.

Getting vaccinated is one of the safest ways to protect your health. The CDC recommends all adults stay current on routine vaccinations, including COVID-19, Flu, and Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough). For those over the age of 65, Pneumococcal and Shingles vaccinations are also recommended.

Medicare Part B fully covers flu, pneumococcal, COVID-19, and Hepatitis B vaccines if needed, while beneficiaries with Medicare Part D are eligible for Tdap and Shingles vaccines at no cost. To find out more about Medicare coverage for vaccines and other services, go to [Medicare.Gov](https://www.medicare.gov).

Be sure to talk to your doctor about which vaccines you need. Learn more at <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/vaccinations-older-adults>.

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### Additional Resources From Our Partners

- Administration for Community Living: [Impact of the ADA - A Guest Blog by Ed Ahernon](#)
- Advancing States: [HCBS Conference Registration Open](#)
- Benefits.gov: [Mental Health Support for Veterans: A Guide to Government Programs](#)
- Maryland Attorney General: [Hate Crimes Hotline and Portal](#)
- National Center to Reframe Aging: [Quick Start Guide](#)
- Veterans Administration Caregiver Support: [Building Better Caregivers Workshop](#)
- LifeSpan Network: [2024 Conference Registration](#)
- Maryland Insurance Administration: [Health Coverage Assistance Team](#)
- Office of People's Counsel: [Is My Utility Company Allowed to do That?](#)
- Positive Aging Community: [Upcoming Webinars](#)
- Johns Hopkins School of Public Health: [Hurricane Preparedness Tips From Public Health Experts](#)



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