

2025 Rural Summit

Elevate

Resilience

Collaborate

Innovate

Growth

Opportunity

Community



Elevating Maryland Through Stronger Rural Communities

November 19 - 20 | Annapolis, Maryland



2025 Rural Summit

Elevating Maryland Through Stronger Rural Communities

Dear Attendees,

Welcome to the 2025 Rural Summit, hosted by the Rural Maryland Council. Maryland has often been called *"America in miniature"*—a state that encompasses bustling cities, vibrant suburbs, working farms, scenic forests, and thriving small towns. Rural areas cover 75% of Maryland's land area and are home to nearly 1.7 million residents who, like all Marylanders, share a vision of a high quality of life: access to education, good jobs, broadband, health care, locally produced food, and healthy natural environments.

Recent years have demonstrated the extraordinary resilience of rural communities. From economic disruptions to global challenges, Maryland's small towns have shown how collaboration, innovation, and resourcefulness can sustain communities and inspire growth. These strengths offer a model for the entire state—one rooted in sustainability, equity, and shared prosperity.

This year's Summit, "Elevating Maryland Through Stronger Rural Communities," celebrates the people, partnerships, and ideas that drive rural progress. Together, we will explore opportunities in economic development, infrastructure, health, education, agriculture, and broadband, and foster the collaboration needed to ensure that all Marylanders benefit from strong and connected rural regions.

When rural communities thrive, all of Maryland is elevated - economically, socially, and culturally. Thank you for joining us as we work together to strengthen, invest in, and celebrate the future of rural Maryland.



Susan O'Neill
Executive Board Chair, Rural Maryland



Charlotte Davis
Executive Director, Rural Maryland Council

Navigating the Summit

Registration is located in the Main Concourse, near the Harbour Room. Exhibitors are set up along the Main Concourse hallway.

The main session and breakout sessions will be held on the upper level in the Mainsail Ballroom and on the lower level in the Coastal Main/East, Coastal West, and Leeward rooms.

Participants will enjoy a continental hot breakfast served in the Main Concourse and a plated lunch in the Mainsail Ballroom (Main & East). Coffee, tea, and water stations will be available throughout the day.

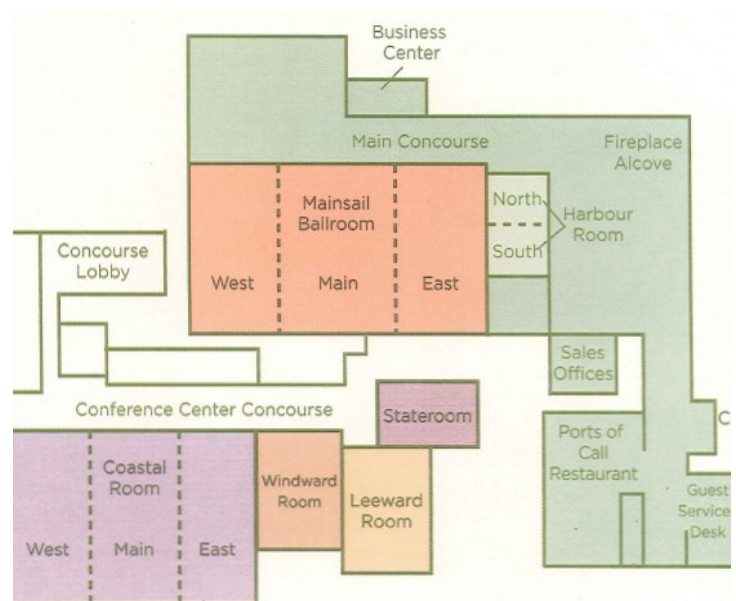
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2025 Rural Summit

Elevating Maryland Through Stronger Rural Communities

Wednesday, November 19, 2025 - Tour, Annual Dinner & Awards Ceremony | Thursday, November 20, 2025 - Rural Summit

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Annapolis, Maryland | 210 Holiday Court, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Rural Health Innovation Tour - Wednesday, November 19, 2025	
10:00am to 5:00pm	<p>In celebration of <i>National Rural Health Day</i>, the Rural Maryland Council will host a Health Innovation Bus Tour spotlighting innovative programs and partnerships improving access to care and wellness in rural communities.</p> <p>Participants will explore three leading examples of rural health innovation:</p> <p>Choptank Community Health System's Federalsburg Health Center – a newly opened facility expanding primary and preventive care for residents of Caroline County and beyond.</p> <p>For All Seasons, Inc. in Easton – a nonprofit integrating behavioral health and wellness initiatives through its “Bringing Mental Health to Main Street” campaign.</p> <p>University of Maryland Shore Regional Medical Center Site – the future home of a modern hospital in Talbot County, demonstrating the state’s commitment to regional health infrastructure.</p> <p>The tour will feature guest speakers, networking opportunities, and guided site visits that highlight successful collaborations, infrastructure investments, and innovative service models advancing health equity across rural Maryland. <i>Participants will depart from the Concourse Lobby, located at the lower level of the Double Tree by Hilton.</i></p>

RMC Annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony - Wednesday, November 19, 2025	
6:00pm– 8:00pm	<p>Mainsail Ballroom (Main & East) DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Annapolis</p> <p>Please join the Rural Maryland Council for our Annual Meeting, featuring dinner and the Rural Impact Awards Ceremony as we celebrate outstanding leadership and achievements that strengthen Maryland’s rural communities.</p>

Opening 2025 Rural Summit - Thursday, November 20, 2025	
7:30am – 8:30am	<p>Concourse Exhibitor Set-Up</p>
8:00am – 9:00am	<p>Concourse Participant Registration/Visit Exhibitors <i>Enjoy a Continental Breakfast Before the Program</i></p>
8:00am-9:00am	<p>Stateroom Learning Opportunity: Rural Maryland Preservation and Advancement Trust Hosted by the Transfer of Wealth Committee</p> <p>Learn about the proposed <i>Rural Maryland Preservation and Advancement Trust</i> (“Rural Trust”), an initiative inspired by the <i>Rural Maryland Philanthropic Development Strategy Report</i> by Locus Impact Investing. The Trust seeks to capture a portion of the \$64 billion intergenerational wealth transfer projected in rural Maryland (2017–2026) to reinvest in rural communities, preserve working lands, and strengthen local economies.</p>

2025 Rural Summit Continued				
9:00am – 10:25am	Mainsail Ballroom (Main & East)			
	Welcome - RMC Chair Susan O’Neill			
	Guest Speaker: Secretary Meena Seshamani, Maryland Department of Health			
	Keynote Speaker: Tony Pipa, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institute			
	Tony Pipa is a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution’s Center for Sustainable Development, where he leads the Reimagining Rural Policy initiative and hosts the <i>Reimagine Rural</i> podcast. With over three decades of leadership in philanthropy and public service, Tony has worked globally and nationally to advance inclusive economic development, including helping launch the Foundation for Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina and representing the U.S. at the U.N. to negotiate the Sustainable Development Goals. A native of rural Pennsylvania, he is a graduate of Duke University and the Harvard Kennedy School.			
5 Minute Transition/Visit Exhibitors – Coffee Break				
Breakout Session A	Track 1: Agriculture	Track 2: Community Development	Track 3: Economic Development	Track 4: Health Care
10:30 am – 11:45am	Growing Opportunities: Value-Added Agriculture and Agritourism	Connecting Communities: Pathways to Rural Resilience	Building Vibrant Communities Through Recreation	From Training to Ownership: Asian American Center of Frederick’s Community Health Worker Co-op as a Future Workforce Model
11:45am-1:45pm	Mainsail Ballroom (Main & East)			
	Plated Lunch and Plenary Sessions			
12:00pm-12:45pm	Plenary: Rural Planning & Land Use			
12:45pm-1:00pm	Guest Speaker: Secretary Kevin Atticks, Maryland Department of Agriculture			
	Secretary Josh Kurtz, Maryland Department of Natural Recourses			
1:00pm-1:45pm	Plenary: Maryland Legislative Panel			
	Senator Arthur Ellis, Senator J.B. Jennings, Senator Steve Hershey, Delegate Regina Boyce, and Delegate Jesse Pippy			
5 Minute Transition/Visit Exhibitors – Coffee Break				
2:00pm-3:00pm	Stateroom			
	Learning Opportunity: Power Up Rural Communities with Maryland Energy Administration Grants			
	The Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) and the Rural Maryland Council (RMC) invite you to an informal discussion designed to help rural communities successfully apply for <i>Local Government Energy Management (L-GEM)</i> grants. These grants support energy efficiency, renewable energy, and infrastructure improvements across Maryland’s rural areas.			
	Whether you’re a local government, municipality, vendor, or collaborative partner, this workshop will provide hands-on support, expert guidance, and partnership opportunities to strengthen your energy grant applications.			
	We would also love to hear about your projects, whether you have one in mind or whether you already applied for L-GEM funding!			
Breakout Session B	Track 1: Agriculture	Track 2: Community Development	Track 3: Economic Development	Track 4: Health Care
1:50pm-3:05pm	Feeding the Future: Collaborative Approaches to Food System Development	Exploring Pathways to Homeownership in Rural Maryland	Enhancing Visitor Experience: Elevating the quality of visitor and resident interactions	Making Prescription Drugs More Affordable in Maryland

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2025 Rural Summit Continued				
10 Minute Transition/Visit Exhibitors - Coffee Break				
3:00pm-4:00pm	Windward Room Learning Opportunity: Rural Broadband Stake Holders Update Meeting Join Rural Broadband Stakeholders to learn about building the capacity of broadband assets, receive an update on the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, and hear about ongoing digital inclusion efforts. The Stakeholders acts as a coordinating committee of the RMC to advocate for funding for broadband access in rural Maryland and digital inclusion efforts.			
Breakout Session C	Track 1: Agriculture	Track 2: Community Development	Track 3: Economic Development	Track 4: Health Care
3:15pm-4:30pm	Navigating Data and Defending Maryland Agriculture	What We Build Together Sustains Us: The Origin and Future of Chesapeake Heartland	Inclusive Rural Communities: Embracing Autism and Developmental Disabilities	Elevating Rural Health: Tools, Resources, and State Policy Updates
5 Minute Transition/Visit Exhibitors				
4:35pm-5:00pm	Mainsail Ballroom (Main & East) RMC Closing Remarks & Drawing Wrap up the day with final reflections from the Rural Maryland Council and a special guest from the Office of the Comptroller of Maryland. Don't miss your chance to win a brand-new RMC hat - our first ever!			

Rural Development Continuing Education Unit

The Rural Development Continuing Education Unit (CEU) offered at the 2025 Rural Summit recognizes participants' commitment to advancing their professional knowledge and leadership in rural policy, planning, and community development. The CEU provides formal acknowledgment of the skills, insights, and practical strategies gained through participation in sessions focused on economic development, infrastructure, health care, workforce readiness, agriculture, environmental stewardship, and community collaboration.

By earning this CEU, attendees demonstrate their engagement in lifelong learning and their dedication to strengthening Maryland's rural communities through innovative, data-driven, and equitable approaches. The credit may also support ongoing professional certification requirements for those working in public administration, planning, nonprofit management, or related fields.

CEU Timeline

Form Opens: Wednesday, November 19, 2025 at 8:00am

Form Closes: Friday, November 28, 2025 at 4:00pm

This certificate verifies the number of Continuing Education Hours (CEHs) earned at this event.

One CEH = one clock hour of organized learning

CEU Acceptance toward licensure or certification is determined solely by your licensing /credentialing body. Participants should submit this certificate along with the event agenda for review.



Breakout Sessions - Agriculture Track

Breakout Session #1 - Growing Opportunities: Value-Added Agriculture and Agritourism

Time: 10:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. Location: Coastal West

Panelists

- Martin Proulx, Value Added Agricultural Specialist, Maryland Department of Agriculture
- Prem B. Bhandari, PhD, Agritourism and Value-Added Agricultural Marketing Specialist, UMES Extension
- Kelly Dudeck, Principal, Cultivate + Craft
- Jerry D. Donald, President, County Council, Frederick County

Join this panel to explore Maryland's evolving farm landscape. Experts will discuss new policy guidance, the rise of agritourism, and how local initiatives are driving growth in value-added agriculture. Gain fresh insights into the challenges, opportunities, and real economic impact transforming small farms across the state.

Breakout Session #2 - Feeding the Future: Collaborative Approaches to Food System Development

Time: 1:50p.m. to 3:05 p.m. Location: Coastal West

Panelists

- Amy Cawley, Manager, Farm to Food Bank
- Kate Long, Sr. Director of Nutrition Programs, Maryland Food Bank
- Stephanie Lansing, Ph.D., Professor, Director of the Bioenergy and Biotechnology Laboratory Department of Environmental Science & Technology, University of Maryland, College Park
- Heather Bois Bruskin, Director, Office of Food Systems Resilience, Montgomery County
- Willie Lantz, Extension Educator, Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Maryland Extension, Garrett County

Explore how innovative partnerships are reshaping food access in Maryland. This panel will explore the Maryland Foodbank's Culturally Inclusive Crop Project and the collaborative efforts of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council. Learn how local farmers and food pantries are meeting the needs of diverse communities by growing culturally relevant produce, and how statewide collaboration is driving creative solutions for food insecurity in rural areas. Join us for a dynamic discussion on building a resilient, inclusive food system that benefits all Marylanders.

Breakout Session #3 - Navigating Data and Defending Maryland Agriculture

3:15 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Location: Coastal West

Panelists

- Erin Silva, Project Manager, Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative
- Andrew Rose, Advisor, BIO-ISAC
- Woody DeLauder, Owner, Rootbound Farms LLC
- Jordan Jones-Cordero, Agriculture and Allied Careers Instructor Maryland Center for Environmental Training (MCET), College of Southern Maryland

Learn how innovative data tools are reshaping agriculture in Maryland - and why protecting these advances is more urgent than ever. This dynamic session spotlights new platforms for tracking agricultural trends, managing farm records, and informing smart decisions. It also confronts the growing threats of cyber and biosecurity attacks as digital tools become central to the field. Join experts as they share actionable solutions for leveraging data while securing Maryland's agricultural future against evolving risks.

Breakout Sessions - Community Development Track

Breakout Session #1 - Collaboration and Partnership as Pathways to Rural Resilience

Time: 10:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. Location: Mainsail West

Panelists

- Angel Perez, CEO, Caroline Pride
- Susan Berry Hill, AICP, Community Heart & Soul Coach
- Joan Wagner, Ed.D., Senior Associate, Community Heart and Soul

Rural communities can forge stronger futures by building inclusive partnerships and engaging residents through innovative outreach. This session brings together experts from Community Heart & Soul and the Chesapeake Culinary Center who will each share proven strategies for overcoming barriers to access, creating multilingual and accessible communications, and uniting communities. Learn practical, equity-driven approaches and inspiring real-world examples that empower rural leaders to foster cooperation, amplify underrepresented voices, and plan for a vibrant, connected tomorrow. Couldn't we all benefit from hearing a bit more about the places where people are coming together in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration?

Breakout Session #2 - Exploring Pathways to Homeownership in Rural Maryland

Time: 1:50p.m. to 3:05 p.m. Location: Mainsail West

Panelists

- Scott Gottbreht, PhD, Assistant Secretary of Policy, Division of Policy, Strategy & Research, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
- Dominic J. Butchko, Director of Intergovernmental Relations, Maryland Association of Counties (MACo)
- Yvonne Golcewski, Executive Director, Habitat for Humanity, Susquehanna
- Molly Hilligoss, CEO, Habitat for Humanity of Wicomico County

This dynamic panel will highlight innovative programs where career and technology center students contribute to building new housing units, while also delving into the challenges of securing land in rural Maryland. The discussion will identify emerging models for affordable homeownership - focusing on creative financing and ownership structures tailored to rural communities - and examine upcoming legislation for the 2026 MGA Legislative Session designed to incentivize new unit creation. Attendees will gain insights into practical solutions and policy approaches addressing the unique housing needs of rural Maryland.

Breakout Session #3 - What We Build Together Sustains Us: The Origin and Future of Chesapeake Heartland

3:15 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Location: Mainsail West

Panelists

- Darius Johnson, Chesapeake Heartland Project Director, The Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience, Washington College
- Jaelon Moaney, Deputy Director of the Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience at Washington College (RMC Executive Board, District 5)
- Mary McComas, PhD, Superintendent, Kent County Public Schools
- Patrick Nugent, PhD, Thomas V. Mike Miller Director of Civic Engagement, Assistant Research Professor of Civic Engagement, Department of Political Science, Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience at Washington College

Uncover how Chesapeake Heartland: An African American Humanities Project is redefining community connection and cultural preservation in rural America. This session will spotlight how digital innovation is, and the humanities are, bridging geographic divides, opening access to vital archives and setting new ethical standards for collective memory. Explore how the interdisciplinary Project's human-centered approach to public history inspires empathy, growth, and a deeper investment in shared sense of place on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Breakout Sessions - Economic Development Track

Breakout Session #1 - Building Vibrant Communities Through Recreation

Time: 10:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. Location: Coastal Main & East

Panelists

- Sandi Olek, Director, Office of Outdoor Recreation at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- Jeffrey Simcoe, Executive Director, Frostburg Outdoor Recreation Economy Institute, Division of Advancement & Regional Engagement, Frostburg State University
- Owen Bailey, Director of Land Use and Policy, Eastern Shore Land Conservancy
- Jennifer Sulin-Stair, Owner, Plot Twist Horse Farm

Master how regional trail and outdoor recreation initiatives are transforming Maryland's communities! This engaging panel features leaders from the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy and Frostburg Outdoor Recreation Economy Institute, who will share inspiring stories of grassroots coalition-building, environmental stewardship, and rural revitalization. Learn how local partnerships are unlocking state investment and fueling a thriving outdoor economy across Maryland. Join us for actionable insights, real-world success stories, and practical strategies to grow vibrant, connected communities through the outdoors.

Breakout Session #2 - Enhancing Visitor Experience: Elevating the Quality of Visitor and Resident Interactions

Time: 1:50p.m. to 3:05 p.m. Location: Coastal Main & East

Panelists

- Tiffany Ahalt, Destination Marketing and Non-Profit Management Professional, Visit Hagerstown & Washington County Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Lucille Walker, Executive Director, Southern Maryland National Heritage Area

Experience the rising appeal of rural America as a destination for leisure, business, and new ventures. Modern travelers increasingly seek authentic connections with local people, heritage, and culture. This panel will examine how strategic storytelling can engage employees, leaders, and residents, fostering community pride and stimulating tourism, relocation, and economic development. Join us to discover how your rural narrative can become a catalyst for community success.

Breakout Session #3 - Inclusive Rural Communities: Embracing Autism and Developmental Disabilities

3:15 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Location: Coastal Main & East

Panelists

- Julie Hickey, VP of Children's Services, Benedictine School
- Casey Townsend Discovery/Resource Specialist The Benedictine School

Join us for a dynamic session exploring how communities can recognize, respect, and include individuals with developmental disabilities, such as Autism and Intellectual Disabilities. Learn practical strategies for building awareness and fostering inclusion, while gaining insights into the unique characteristics and needs of these individuals. This engaging conversation will empower community members to make a positive impact and create more welcoming, supportive environments for everyone. Discover how your community can better recognize, respect, and include people with developmental disabilities. This lively panel shares practical tips and real-world insights to help everyone foster a more welcoming, inclusive environment.

Breakout Sessions - Health Care Track

Breakout Session #1 - From Training to Ownership: Asian American Center of Frederick's Community Health Worker Co-op as a Future Workforce Model

Time: 10:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. - Location: Leeward

Panelists

- Elizabeth Chung, Executive Director, Asian American Center of Frederick (AACF)
- Noemi Giszpenc, Executive Director, Keystone Development Center (KDC)
- Rachel Netski, Director of Development, Asian American Center of Frederick
- Maria Chaplgina, Associate Training Manager, Asian American Center of Frederick

The Asian American Center of Frederick (AACF), in partnership with the Keystone Development Center (KDC), is transforming its Community Health Worker (CHW) training program into a worker-owned, tech-enabled cooperative that advances both health equity and economic mobility for New Americans. The cooperative model empowers CHWs as business owners who deliver community-based care through shared governance, data-driven tools, and sustainable contracts. By integrating a pre-apprenticeship pathway, leadership training, and AI-supported systems, AACF and KDC are creating a replicable model for equitable, community-led healthcare and workforce innovation in rural Maryland. Join this session to learn how cooperative development, technology, and community partnerships can reimagine the rural workforce and create scalable, sustainable solutions for health and economic resilience.

Breakout Session #2 - Making Prescription Drugs More Affordable in Maryland

Time: 1:50p.m. to 3:05 p.m. Location: Leeward

Panelists

- Vincent DeMarco, President, Maryland Health Care for All Coalition
- Andrew York, Pharm.D., J.D. Executive Director Maryland Prescription Drug Affordability Board

Rising drug prices hurt rural Marylanders and exacerbate health disparities. Discover how Maryland's Prescription Drug Affordability Board is tackling soaring medication costs, with a focus on rural communities. This session will review the Board's innovative strategies, real impact so far, and how rural Marylanders can help shape a fairer, more affordable future for all.

Breakout Session #3 - Elevating Rural Health: Tools, Resources, and State Policy Updates

3:15 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Location: Leeward

Panelists

- Sara Seitz, Director State Office of Rural Health, Office of Population Health Improvement, Maryland Department of Health
- Christa Speicher, Deputy Director, Medical Economics and Data Analytics Health Services Cost Review Commission
- Bronte Nevins, Senior Health Policy Analyst, Maryland Department of Health

The healthcare delivery models are evolving and innovating. Hear about the new values as detailed in the updated Maryland Rural Strategic Health Plan. Discover how Maryland's new AHEAD model, launching in 2026, will transform healthcare statewide. This panel brings together experts to discuss improved care, affordability, and the unique impacts on rural communities and Medicaid. Learn how collaboration is shaping the future of Maryland healthcare.

Keynote Speaker Highlight



Tony Pipa is a senior fellow in the Center for Sustainable Development at the Brookings Institution. Tony launched and leads the Reimagining Rural Policy initiative, which seeks to modernize and transform U.S. policy to better enable equitable and sustainable development across rural America. He also launched and leads the Local Leadership on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) initiative, which explores the approach cities and local institutions are taking to solve local problems while driving progress on global policy and transnational issues.

Other research interests include city diplomacy and its influence on national foreign policy and multilateral institutions; the effectiveness of U.S. foreign assistance; and advancement of the SDGs in the U.S.

Tony has three decades of executive leadership experience in the philanthropic and public sectors addressing poverty and advancing inclusive economic development in the U.S. and globally. He served as chief strategy officer at the

U.S. Agency for International Development and held multiple senior policy positions at the agency. He also led the U.S. delegation at the U.N. to negotiate and adopt the SDGs, serving as U.S. special coordinator for the Post-2015 Agenda at the U.S. Department of State.

His work on the international stage built upon a legacy of philanthropic leadership to advance community and economic development. While at the Triangle Community Foundation, he created one of the first programs nationwide focused on helping donor advisors maximize their philanthropic impact. He served as founding CEO of the Warner Foundation in Durham, North Carolina, focused on improving race relations and economic opportunity in the state, and subsequently helped launch the Foundation for Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina. He has played a principal role in the start-up of multiple philanthropic ventures focused on addressing poverty and improving distressed communities.

Tony serves as the vice-chair of the board of directors of StriveTogether; as a senior associate research fellow in the Global Cities program at the Italian Institute for International Political Studies; and as a member of several task forces and advisory committees. He grew up in rural Elysburg, Pennsylvania, in the heart of anthracite coal country and attended Stanford University, graduated from Duke University, and earned a Master of Public Administration at the Harvard Kennedy School.

Featured Speakers



Kevin Atticks, Secretary, Maryland Department of Agriculture – Kevin Atticks was appointed Secretary of Agriculture on January 17, 2023. He is the founder and former CEO of Grow & Fortify, a firm supporting value-added agricultural businesses, and led the first assessment of Maryland's value-added agriculture sector, which spans wineries, creameries, meat processing, agritourism, equine, and other industries. Atticks also served as Executive Director of the Maryland Wineries Association, Brewers Association of Maryland, and the Maryland Distillers Guild, and held leadership roles as President of the Maryland Agricultural Resource Council and Chair of the Wine America State & Regional Associations Advisory Council.

Featured Speakers



Josh Kurtz, Secretary, Maryland Department of Natural Resources – Josh Kurtz, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, is a lifelong conservationist and outdoor enthusiast dedicated to protecting the state’s natural treasures. Under the Moore–Miller Administration, he leads statewide efforts to improve water quality, restore forested lands, expand park access, combat invasive species, and maintain sustainable fisheries. Previously, he served as Maryland Executive Director of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and as Policy and Government Relations Director for The Nature Conservancy, where he advanced landmark conservation and climate policies. Kurtz holds a master’s degree in public policy from George Mason University and a bachelor’s degree in wildlife conservation from the University of Delaware.

Meena Seshamani, MD, PhD, Secretary, Maryland Department of Health – Meena Seshamani leads Maryland’s Department of Health, overseeing 9,000 employees, 11 state-run health facilities, and a \$20 billion budget. She previously served as Deputy Administrator and Director of the Center for Medicare at CMS, leading transformative initiatives to improve health care access, equity, and innovation, including reforms to Medicare Advantage, the Physician Fee Schedule, and the Medicare Drug Price Negotiation program. A Hopkins-trained surgeon and Oxford-trained economist, Dr. Seshamani has held senior leadership roles at MedStar Health and provided clinical care at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital and Kaiser Permanente. Her work in health policy, population health, and clinical care has been widely recognized and published in leading medical journals.



Plenary Speakers - Rural Planning and Land Use



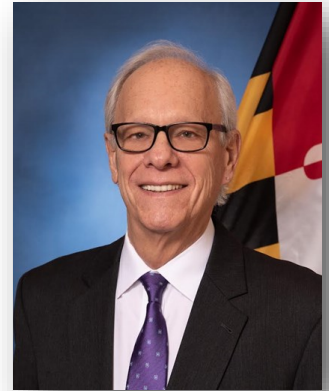
Rebecca Flora, AICP, Secretary, Maryland Department of Planning – Appointed by Governor Moore in January 2023, Rebecca Flora brings over 40 years of experience spanning public, private, and nonprofit sectors. She has led nationally recognized sustainable development projects, including the world’s first LEED Gold convention center and multiple award-winning resiliency plans. A former chair of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh’s Affordable Housing Advisory Council and a U.S. Green Building Council board member, Flora also taught sustainable community development at Carnegie Mellon University. At MDP, she advances equitable economic growth grounded in diversity, heritage, and environmental stewardship.

Plenary Speakers - Rural Planning and Land Use



Ann Jones, Land Preservation Leader – Ann Jones has spent her career safeguarding Maryland’s rural landscapes. Growing up in Howard County, she witnessed the rapid loss of farmland to suburban development, inspiring her family to secure one of the county’s first agricultural easement grants. Over more than 20 years, Jones has worked with the Valleys Planning Council and the Land Preservation Trust to protect over 26,000 acres in the Piney Run Watershed through more than 300 easements. She collaborates closely with landowners to promote sustainable stewardship practices that benefit land, water, air, and wildlife. A lifelong advocate for farmland preservation, Jones remains rooted on her family farm, continuing her family’s 276-year legacy, and is a proud mother and grandmother committed to connecting future generations to the land.

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Director, Maryland Energy Administration – Paul Pinsky was appointed Director of the Maryland Energy Administration by Governor Moore and took office on January 18, 2023. Prior to this role, he served seven terms in the Maryland State Senate, where he chaired the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and was a long-standing member of the Maryland Commission on Climate Change. Pinsky has been a tireless advocate for climate action and the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay, serving as the principal author of numerous environmental laws that have shaped Maryland’s environmental policies over the past two decades. In his current role, he leads efforts to advance clean energy, reduce emissions, and support sustainable energy solutions across the state.



Parker Welch, Executive Director, Maryland Farm Bureau – Parker Welch has served as Executive Director of the Maryland Farm Bureau since July 2023. He previously worked as a Regional Field Manager and registered lobbyist for the organization, and has been with Maryland Farm Bureau for 11 years. Raised on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, Welch comes from a family that has operated a sixth-generation farm, giving him deep personal insight into the challenges and opportunities facing Maryland agriculture. He is a 2007 graduate of Virginia Tech and a Class X Fellow of LEAD Maryland. In his current role, Welch advocates for farmers, promotes sustainable agricultural practices, and works to strengthen Maryland’s rural communities and farming economy.

Plenary Speakers - Legislative Panel



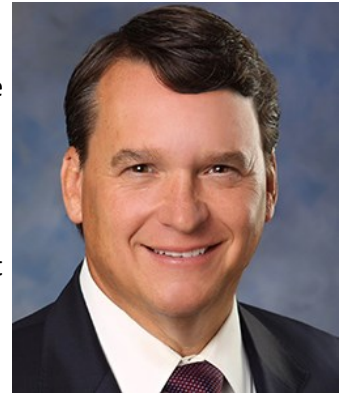
Senator Arthur Ellis, Deputy Majority Leader, Maryland Senate - Senator Arthur Ellis, a Disabled Veteran and 27-year resident of Charles County, was first elected to the Maryland Senate in 2018 and currently serves as Deputy Majority Leader, Vice Chair of the Rules Committee, and Chair of the Workers’ Compensation Benefit and Insurance Oversight Committee. A Certified Public Accountant and U.S. Air Force veteran, Ellis brings extensive experience in finance, education, and community leadership to his legislative work. He is a lifelong Progressive Democrat and active member of the Democratic National Committee, dedicated to advancing policies that promote equity, fiscal responsibility, and opportunity for Marylanders. Born in Jamaica, West Indies, Ellis has received numerous honors for his service, including the AmeriCorps Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award.

Plenary Speakers - Legislative Panel



Senator J.B. Jennings, Maryland Senate - Senator J.B. Jennings is a lifelong Baltimore County resident, has built a distinguished career rooted in service, integrity, and community. A former volunteer firefighter and EMT, he earned a business degree from the University of Baltimore before co-owning The Mill of Hereford, a farm supply store serving Maryland's agricultural community. Elected to the Maryland House of Delegates in 2002 and later to the State Senate in 2011, Jennings has championed fiscal responsibility and bipartisan cooperation, including six years as Senate Minority Leader. He also serves in the Maryland Air National Guard's cyber security unit, reflecting his dedication to state and country. Now President and CEO of a cyber-intelligence firm, Jennings continues to balance public service with business leadership.

Senator Steve Hershey, Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee, Maryland Senate - Senator Steve Hershey, a lifelong Marylander and businessman, has represented the Upper Shore in the Maryland Senate since 2013, following his earlier service in the House of Delegates. A former Senate Republican Whip for six years, he is known as a champion for families, workers, and businesses of all sizes. As Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, and a member of the Health Policy Subcommittee, Committee on Legislative Ethics, Oyster Advisory Commission, and Rural Healthcare Workgroup, Hershey brings practical expertise from his career in commercial real estate development and construction to his policymaking. A graduate of Catholic University with a degree in Civil Engineering and an MBA from George Washington University, he is committed to fostering policies that strengthen Maryland's economy, protect its farmlands and shorelines, and ensure the Upper Shore remains a great place to live and work.



Delegate Regina T. Boyce, Vice Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee, Maryland House of Delegates - Delegate Regina T. Boyce represents District 43A in Baltimore City and has served on the House Environment and Transportation Committee since her election in 2018. Appointed Vice Chair in 2023, she also chairs the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Open Spaces Subcommittee and serves on the Rules and Executive Nominations Committee. Boyce is a former Chief Deputy Majority Whip and 2nd Vice Chair of the Baltimore City Delegation, and an active member of the Legislative Black, Women's, and Transit Caucuses. A strong advocate for equity, sustainability, and community investment, she serves on multiple task forces and commissions focused on environmental justice and workforce development. Boyce has secured more than \$10 million in capital improvements and provides \$60,000 annually in scholarships to students in her district.

Delegate Jesse Pippy, House Minority Whip, Maryland House of Delegates - Delegate Jesse Pippy was first elected to the Maryland House of Delegates in 2018, representing District 4 (Frederick and Carroll Counties), and currently serves as House Minority Whip, the second-ranking Republican in the General Assembly. A graduate of the University of Maryland School of Law, Jesse practices throughout Maryland and has a record of effective, results-driven leadership in both public service and community engagement. Before his election to the legislature, he chaired the Frederick County Young Republicans, served on and later chaired the Board of License Commissioners for Frederick County, and led efforts to modernize government operations. In his first year as a delegate, he successfully passed 100% of his legislation, including an overhaul of Maryland's human trafficking laws, and went on to chair both the Frederick County Delegation and Republican Central Committee.



Help Shape the Future of Rural Maryland



The Rural Maryland Council is asking residents, business owners, and community leaders to share their experiences in a quick 10-minute survey. Your input will guide legislative advocacy, strengthen program priorities, and inform future MAERDAF and RMPIF grant funding decisions.

Why Your Voice Matters

- Rural communities face unique challenges
- Your lived experience is vital data
- RMC uses your input to create change

What Your Feedback Supports

- Local economic development
- Rural health and wellness
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The 2025 Rural Summit is made possible by the generous support of the Rural Maryland Foundation. Founded in 2001, the Foundation was created with a threefold purpose: to support the efforts of citizens and government to meet the economic and social needs of rural Maryland, to support the efforts of the Rural Maryland Council, and to serve as Maryland's Rural Development Council if the Rural Maryland Council should cease to function in that role.

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Thank You and Acknowledgments

As we conclude the 2025 Rural Summit, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who made it possible.

To our **attendees**, thank you for your enthusiasm, participation, and support. Your presence and engagement make this event truly meaningful.

To our **sponsors and partners**, your generosity and commitment help bring our vision to life. We deeply appreciate your continued support.

And to our **2025 Rural Summit Planning Committee**, your hard work, creativity, and dedication behind the scenes have been the driving force of this program's success.

Thank you to our 2025 Rural Summit Planning Committee Members:

Alice Settle- Raskin, Andrew Rose, Carmella Watkins, Cassandra Vanhooser, Claudia Wilson-Randall, Daniel Rider, Dona Source, Janice Palmer, John Hartline, Matthew Tefteau, Mel Litter, Mindie Burgoyne, Sara Seitz, Scott Warner, Susan O'Neill, and Steve McHenry.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the Summit presenters!





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