

Maryland Department of Disabilities Access Maryland Program

FY 2012 Capital Budget Testimony

“The Maryland Department of Disabilities advances the rights and interests of people with disabilities.”

CAPITAL BUDGET SUB-COMMITTEES

CHAIR: Adrienne A. Jones, House

CHAIR: James E. DeGrange, Sr., Senate

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. MDOD should submit a copy of the final policy and the form agencies will use to request a project cancellation to the budget committees when available. Furthermore, MDOD should notify the budget committees when a project is officially approved for cancellation.**

MDOD concurs with the recommendation and will provide the final policy and form to the budget committees as requested. The following language was included in the FY13 Access Maryland Fact Sheet which was distributed to all agencies with current projects as well as those eligible to receive funds in FY13:

When an agency has had a change in use for the requested facility or the projects is not going to move forward for any reason, the requesting agency must notify MDOD in writing as soon as that decision has been made. The agency should also explain its plan for addressing the identified accessibility issue as a result of the cancellation of the approved project. MDOD will review the documentation and may request a site visit prior to approving the request.

The cancellation form will be available and distributed in April 2011. MDOD will also notify the budget committees if a project is cancelled pursuant to this policy.

DISCUSSION

- 1. MDOD should comment on how the new Transition Plan and Cost Overrun policies are expected to improve program management.**

Response:

Transition Plans

Transition plans should be of significant assistance in understanding the current and continuing magnitude of the unaddressed physical barriers that remain in State-owned facilities. These barriers prevent access to State programs, services, and employment opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities. Transition plans are living documents and should be updated each time a project is completed or additional need is identified. Transition plans will remain on file for 3 years. Projects within the transition plans are to be prioritized by each agency. Through analysis of the transition plans, which include cost estimates, MDOD will be in a better position to assist the agencies in identifying the proper scope of proposed projects and have a greater understanding of the State's potential liability for lawsuits related to access to its facilities and programs.

Cost Overrun Policy

Beginning in FY12, projects that exceed their anticipated costs by no more than 25 percent **may** retain current funding eligibility within the current cycle subject to review on a case- by- case basis. Projects with construction costs in excess of 25 percent of the approved amount will need to be submitted for a future cycle of funding with revised cost estimates gleaned during the design process. The request cycle for Access Maryland Projects has been revised to allow sufficient time for the Department of General Services (DGS) to review the scope of work and cost estimates for those projects located in facilities for which DGS has management responsibility. Project requests are now due in March rather than in May.

The Cost Overrun process also includes improved data management. In addition to our existing procedure for tracking agency expenditures by fiscal year, MDOD will also track agency projects in the context of their revised transition plans. This will enable MDOD to better identify agencies that provide accurate cost estimates and those which typically prove inaccurate. This information will also be utilized during the transition plan analysis to assist those agencies with past cost overruns to more accurately estimate of future expenditures for accessibility improvements.

Taken together both of these policy enhancements improve MDOD's ability to be proactive in its long range planning for accessibility needs. The new policies also provide an incentive for the agencies to refine their process for cost estimates and enable us to more efficiently manage available funds due to a reduction in the need for carryover funding and cash flow adjustments.

Attachment

Maryland Department of Disabilities

Overview of the Department

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) was created by statute in 2004 to work across all units of government that create policy or deliver services for people with disabilities. The Department has eight policy domains: Community Living, Transportation, Education, Children and Families, Employment and Training, Health and Behavioral Health, Assistive Technology, and Housing. In addition, MDOD administers five programs/activities: the **Access Maryland Program**, Maryland Technology Assistance Program (MD-TAP), Constituent Services Program (CSP), Attendant Care Program (ACP), and the Department's Emergency Preparedness activities.

In addition, the Maryland Commission on Disabilities (MCOB) serves as an advisory body to the MDOD. Appointed by the Governor, this diverse group of individuals with disabilities and other stakeholders is a robust catalyst to the Department. The full Commission meets throughout the year and subcommittees consider complex issues like State and Federal legislation, home and community based services and strategic planning. Each year, several members of the Commission serve as reviewers for the Access Maryland Program, reading and prioritizing all projects for which agencies have requested funding through the program.

Access Maryland

The Access Maryland program provides funds from the State's Capital Budget to eliminate architectural barriers in State-owned facilities and helps provide programmatic access for Marylanders with disabilities. The program also increases opportunities for the public to benefit from State programs and services, including office complexes, university classrooms, and State parks and recreation facilities. Higher education is a key State service that leads to increased income and increased independence for people with disabilities and a decreasing reliance on government provided subsidies, thus, much of the Access Maryland funding is awarded to colleges.

Categories of projects funded by Access Maryland include:

- Institutions of Higher Education, including the University System of Maryland, Morgan State University and St. Mary's College;
- State Office buildings including the Baltimore and Annapolis complexes;
- Miscellaneous state operated buildings such as district courts/multi-service centers, and
- Recreation facilities such as State parks and museums.

Highlights of projects completed during FY10

Higher Education:

University of Maryland College Park, Art Sociology Building – multiple rest room modifications and provision of accessible water fountains.

Access to Programs and Services:

Schaefer Tower: Installation of automatic door operators for access to programs and services.

MSDE Headquarters/Grasmick Building: Installation of automatic door operators for public access to meetings.

Eastern Correctional Facility: Modifications to visitor rest rooms.

Western Maryland Hospital Center: Modifications to patio serving dialysis patients. Phase I completed in FY10, Phase II requested in FY12.

Categories of Projects in Progress or Completed by Fiscal Year

