

**Maryland Military Department
Testimony**

Fiscal Year 2017 Operating Budget

**Presented to
Senate Health and Human Services (HHS) Subcommittee
February 11, 2016**

**House Public Safety and Administration (PSA) Subcommittee
February 15, 2016**

Introduction

The Maryland Military Department appreciates this opportunity to update the committee on the activities of the Department and to respond to the issues raised and recommendations contained in the operating budget analysis prepared by the Department of Legislative Services (DLS).

This document contains the following information:

1. Highlights of the Maryland Military Department's key accomplishments of the past year.
2. A discussion of the key issues affecting the Department, as discussed in the analysis prepared by the Department of Legislative Services (DLS).
3. The Department's response to the recommendations of the Department of Legislative Services

Key Accomplishments

I am pleased to submit to the budget committees our key accomplishments in fiscal year 2015 for the Maryland Military Department. This summary incorporates the accomplishments of the Maryland Army National Guard, Maryland Air National Guard, Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and Maryland Defense Force (MDDF).

The Maryland Army and Air National Guard continued to support many overseas contingency operations. In addition, to supporting operations in Afghanistan, our military personnel have served in Estonia, Horn of Africa, Bosnia, & Herzegovina and on our southwest border with Mexico. In addition, our personnel from all the pillars of our department were mobilized for state service during the civil unrest in Baltimore in late April and early May of this year. The Maryland National Guard was able to mobilize and deploy more than 3,000 in 72 hours. This was done with coordination with MEMA and the support from the MDDF.

The Department remains a solid contributor to the economic strength of Maryland as our fiscal impact totaled \$268 million. The Department's ratio of federal dollars spent for each state dollar invested is nearly 23 to 1. We continue to provide employment and education opportunities to Marylanders while providing our citizens an opportunity to serve our state and our nation.

The Maryland Military Department remains a “relevant and ready” force prepared to serve the needs of our state and nation as we continue a new chapter in our long and distinguished history. Thank you for your support.

Key Issues and Discussion:

Freestate Challenge Academy (FCA) Operations, Performance, and Funding Service:

1. FCA should comment on how the additional funding in fiscal 2016 and 2017 will improve program operations and the experience of participating cadets (DLS Analysis page 16).

Agency Response:

Additional funding in FY16 & 17 will allow FCA to continue to make required facility maintenance repairs and upgrades to maintain a safe and secure environment for cadets to reside in and program staff to operate. The additional funding will also allow us to hire the number of staff required to conduct the program in accordance with the National Guard Master Cooperative Agreement (MCA) manning model. The MCA authorizes 64 positions and we currently have 33 PIN positions. Restrictive funding over the past many years has not allowed us to hire and maintain the number of staff needed to enhance the educational aspects of the program.

The additional funding will assist improving the experience of the cadets by allowing us to improve educational opportunities, such as developing a resource and study center for conducting on-line credit recovery programs for cadets who wish to return to high school. Estimated cost to complete this endeavor is \$50,000-\$100,000 which includes 15-20 computers with tables and chairs, study area furniture, books, software and other study materials to prepare the cadets for completing the on-line courses and return to school.

We also need to purchase updated GED test study and preparation materials for cadets for future classes along with updated ASVAB test and study materials. Furthermore, the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) is being modified which requires us to purchase equipment to grade the new test along with sufficient test and study materials for all future cadets.

2. FCA should comment on why the percent of students obtaining a GED is no longer a reported MFR performance measure and why cadet performance has declined so significantly in recent years. The Department of Legislative Services recommends that this measure, along with the number of applicants, enrolled cadets, and graduates be reported as part of the Military Department’s annual MFR performance measures, beginning with the fiscal 2018 submission. (DLS Analysis page 18).

Agency Response:

Primarily, the GED test results data was removed because the test is not a condition of enrollment and we realized there were too many variables affecting the results to obtain consistent data from class to class. Also, the change in the GED test nationwide in January 2014 required us to re-structure and transition to the new test. Prior to that date, the test was based on the 9th grade testing criteria and was much easier to pass and allow cadets to achieve their high school diploma.

When the new test went into effect, it was based on the 12th grade/college-entrance level of education and was significantly more difficult for our cadets. Since the new test went into effect, we have undertaken new

initiatives to better prepare cadets to take the new test: purchased new test and study materials; received a \$50,000 grant to develop and implement a new computer lab used for GED testing, both the pre-test and actual test. Additionally, we wanted to teach cadets how to utilize MicroSoft computer programming for developing resumes, write letters, and much more. Initially, preparing the cadets for the more difficult test was a very compelling task.

Of the last 4 classes tested under the new test implemented in 2014, an average 38.75% of cadets earned GEDs. The most recent class, class #45, realized a 51% pass rate of those tested. GED pass rate is not a measure used by National Guard Bureau to track program performance. The test is totally voluntary and we must have parental permission to test a cadet so therefore cannot make GED testing mandatory at this point. If Freestate was considered an official GED option program, we could make the test a condition of enrollment. The Adult Basic Education (TABE) testing, which is a program requirement, serves as the standard for determining academic grade level progress and is the primary measure of cadet performance progress for all ChalleNGe programs.

3. FCA should discuss the new initiatives to improve outreach and programmatic opportunities for at-risk youth. (DLS Analysis page 19).

Agency Response:

FCA has implemented several new initiatives over the past year to increase the number of applicants to our program.

We have conducted extensive outreach to county and city leadership and school systems and other agencies such as, Public Safety and Juvenile Services, and other professional organizations around the state that have a vested interest in youth. In 2015, we began conducting a "Cadet for a Day" program for Pupil Personnel Workers and other educators so they can gain a better understanding of the program and how it benefits Maryland's at risk youth. We also conducted an "Industry Day" in 2015 that brought community and business leaders together to provide program awareness and to encourage potential placement of cadets for jobs after graduation. We plan to continue these initiatives each year.

We have scheduled and conducted 4-5 orientations and interview (O&I's) sessions (required for admission) in the local communities around the state. This regional concept allows us to take the program to the candidates and their families and assists us in increasing awareness of our program wherever we go. These events are in addition to the same O&I's we conduct at our location in Edgewood. We have also recently purchased radio ads on Baltimore radio station 105.7 FM "The Fan" to begin preliminary promotion of the FCA program. We will also continue to conduct briefings with various community, business, and professional organizations to promote awareness, assist in recruiting and seek placement for our cadets into jobs upon graduating from our program.

Third, we have implemented a vocational training and education program with National Center on Institutions and Alternatives, a vocational training center in west Baltimore. With them, we have initiated vocational training for cadets in culinary arts, barbering and automotive training. Cadets are able to receive certification in ServSafe (a form of food handlers training and certification that allows them to work in food preparation and serving establishments) as well as certification in automotive servicing. Once the cadets take and pass the Automotive Service of Excellence (ASE) test, they are certified to work in any automotive maintenance and service center in the country.

We are also establishing a similar certification agreement with St. Vincent de Paul's of Baltimore to provide training and certification in medical terminology and early childhood education work beginning with

our current class. Completing either of these programs will also award the cadets with college credit from Howard Community College. We are reviewing further programs in trades training and other skill areas with St. Vincent de Paul's to begin with Class #47 (beginning in July 2016) that will allow cadets to obtain certification in other job areas where cadets will be able to obtain employment once they graduate from the FCA.

Finally, we plan to work with MSDE in order to recruit at-risk youth and students who are expelled from school, not doing well in the classroom and not on track to graduate on time. An issue currently at hand that has become a significant detriment to our recruiting and marketing efforts is the state's Compulsory Attendance" law, passed in 2012.

This law is progressive in age that restricts a student from withdrawing from school. Beginning in 2014, law stated students 16 years old and under would not be able to withdraw from school. This age restriction progressed to 17 years of age on 1 July 2015. Beginning on 1 July 2016, students under the age of 18 will be restricted from withdrawing. Obviously, this has significantly impacted our ability to recruit and bring at-risk youth to our program. This is part of the overall issue we are currently discussing with MSDE to enable us to become the GED option program required by the state law and allow these students to enroll and seek the opportunity to achieve their GED/high school diploma.

4. The Academy should comment on the status of becoming an official GED option program and alternative education program for DJS and LDSS, including a potential timeline for obtaining this approval and any anticipated costs. (DLS Analysis page 19).

Agency Response:

We have begun dialogue with MSDE and DLLR to establish FCA as a GED option program, required by state law, and an alternative education program that includes credit recovery. Ideally, we would like to implement with the beginning of Class #47 (July 2016). The Freestate Challenge Academy could serve two purposes: 1) An alternative education program designed to be a 22 week intervention for at risk 16-17 year old students with the intent of returning them to their high school with higher TABE scores and better prepared to learn and graduate. 2) A GED option program for 17-18 year old students that involves focused GED preparation training by Freestate staff along with life skills training already a core training component at Freestate that better prepares them to continue their education or enter the work place after leaving Freestate.

Becoming a GED option program also endears us to the DJS and DSS agencies because it enables us to assist at-risk youth recommended by them to apply to and enroll in our program, thus aiding these youth in achieving their high school diploma and better prepare them to be productive citizens.

Estimated cost is \$50,000-\$100,000 which includes 15-20 computers with tables and chairs, study area furniture, books, software and other study materials.

Key Trends:

National Guard Facilities Fail to Reach Maintenance Goals:

The Military Department should discuss why critical maintenance funds went unspent in fiscal 2015 and whether the fiscal 2016 and 2017 appropriations are expected to be fully expended. The department

should also comment on how the projects funded in fiscal 2016, once complete, are expected to impact the State's facility rating. (DLS Analysis pages 3 & 7).

Agency Response:

The \$1.9M in critical maintenance funds identified in the DLS analysis was federal funding that was either reprogrammed to execute critical maintenance contracts within underfunded line-items or unexecuted as a result of mid-year FY15 cost containment actions that reduced general funds needed to match and execute the federal funds.

In FY16 and FY17, the Department anticipates executing critical maintenance funds to the extent that general funds remain available to leverage the federal match. Due to unforeseen unfunded maintenance emergencies and shortfalls in other critical maintenance line-items, DMIL may again need to reprogram federal funding. However, the Department does anticipate that overall facility ratings which are documented annually through the Installations Status Report (ISR) process will improve as a result the additional funding provided in fiscal 2016 and 2017 appropriations.

Although, the state is currently faced with a difficult fiscal climate, the Department will continue to work with key state and federal stakeholders to obtain the necessary state and federal funds needed to improve facilities and address repair and maintenance backlogs.

RECOMMENDED DLS ACTIONS:

Recommendation #1: Adopt committee narrative regarding performance measures for the Freestate ChalleNGe Academy (DLS Analysis pages 4 & 20):

The budget committees are interested in the continued monitoring of cadet performance at the Freestate ChalleNGe Academy (FCA). The committee, therefore, direct FCA to add the following information to its annual Managing for Results performance measures, beginning with the fiscal 2018 submission and annually thereafter:

- *Percent of Graduates who obtain a general education diploma;*
- *Number of applicants for the program; and*
- *Number of cadets enrolled in the program.*

Agency Response:

The Department partially concurs with the DLS recommendation. Future MFR submissions will include the number of applicants and number of cadets enrolled in the program. Unless the GED test can be considered a condition of enrollment, we recommend continuing to use the national standard of the TABE test which is a more accurate measure of cadet progress in the program.