



Maryland Public Broadcast Commission
Fiscal Year 2020 Operating Budget
Response to Department of Legislative Service Budget Analysis

Maryland Senate – Budget & Taxation Committee
Education, Business & Administration Subcommittee
Senator Craig J Zucker
February 28, 2020

Maryland House – Appropriations Committee
Education & Economic Development Subcommittee
Delegate Ben Barnes
March 4, 2020

Response to Department of Legislative Service Budget Analysis:

Maryland Public Television recommends that the committee reject the MPT portion of 2020 BRFA language – including the \$215,561 cut – with its threat of repeal of SB 1034, legislation that the Maryland General Assembly enacted only two years ago.

As is clear from the analyst’s submission, MPT is facing a difficult dilemma. For the 2020 legislative session, HB 0152 (cross-filed as SB 0192) was introduced as the “Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2020 (BRFA).” It alters – and, in fact, eliminates -- the previously enacted 2017 bill known as SB 1034.

That earlier law ties MPT’s annual appropriation to increases in Maryland’s own growth in revenue and protects MPT from the loss of any future federal funding.

For the upcoming fiscal year, the SB 1034 formula accounts for some \$215,561 of General Fund Revenue being directed to MPT. That sum – and future sums stemming from SB 1034 -- are now in jeopardy.

The following are probable impacts of the repeal of SB 1034:

- ✓ If SB 1034 protection is lost, MPT is increasingly susceptible to federal funding reductions or eliminations.
- ✓ The disappearance of SB 1034 provisions will invariably trigger reversion to the usual pattern of annual cuts in MPT funding.
- ✓ SB 1034 provides a bona fide way to defray inflationary cost increases across all areas of expense – increases well beyond our control.
- ✓ In its first two years of implementation, SB 1034 funds have enabled the network to make some long-postponed physical plant updates – the kind of modest improvements that ultimately save money for our taxpayers via increased efficiency in lighting, HVAC, and other mechanical services.
- ✓ And, finally, SB 1034 has allowed MPT to fill some long-duration vacancies of critical positions, which translates to better service to our citizens and broader production offerings for their enjoyment.

Bottom line: SB 1034, in its brief lifetime, has been a significant benefit to the fiscal health of MPT. Its disappearance after only two years of implementation will have unfortunate consequences for Maryland's only statewide broadcaster.

Once again, MPT appeals to both Senate and House legislators to support continued funding for Maryland's only statewide broadcaster and to help turn back the threat in this year's BRFA as described on page 4 of the Analysis of the FY 2021 Maryland Executive Budget, 2020 document from the analyst.