



**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES
FISCAL YEAR 2023 OPERATING BUDGET HEARINGS
RESPONSE TO DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES ANALYSIS**

**SENATE BUDGET & TAXATION COMMITTEE
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE
Senator Melony Griffith, Chair**

February 4, 2022

**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE
Delegate Kirill Reznik, Chair
Delegate Geraldine Valentino-Smith, Vice Chair**

February 7, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today as you review the proposed budget for the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) for fiscal year 2023. We would like to thank our assigned DLS analyst, Ms. Grace Pedersen, for her thorough analysis.

Agency Response

Page 8 Key Observation 1:

1. MDOD should comment on its coordination with Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) in overseeing the Senior Call Check program and the reason for the anticipated decrease in funding for the Senior Call Check program in the fiscal 2023 allowance, including whether it relates to the declining UTF balance and if this decrease will result in programmatic changes.

The Senior Call-Check Service and Notification Program (SCC) was established in legislation and launched by MDOA in 2019. MDOD does not have the authority to oversee the SCC. That authority rests with the MDOA (State Finance and Procurement Article s 3A- 702). MDOA also determines the cost that it is expected to incur for an upcoming fiscal year (Human Services Article s 7-806(a) 2) and communicates that to MDOD which we include as

part of our special fund budget submission. MDOD is charged with communicating to the Public Service Commission (PSC) the cost of the programs funded by the USTF. The PSC, in turn, sets a certain cost limitation on programs funded through the USTF.

Our understanding is that MDOA spends what is needed to efficiently operate the program. USTF funds for the SCC program pay for the call center, outreach and marketing, and other related administrative costs. The fiscal 2023 request is based upon what they believe will be utilized to cover these expenditures.

SCC program expenditures, along with all program expenditures funded by the USTF, impact the fund balance. Projected program costs are included in the figures we have already provided to the analyst, Ms. Pederson, and that she cited in Exhibit 4 to indicate the impact of anticipated expenditures and anticipated revenue on the USTF balance in fiscal years 2022-2027. If the SCC program utilization increases, which MDOA is working to achieve, then it will in turn utilize more USTF funding.

The State is legislatively mandated to provide the services funded by the USTF which include the Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM), Deaf/Blind Communication Facilitator and Senior Call Check programs. As cited, the SCC program launched in 2019 and projected usage is still being determined by MDOA. Also, MDOD will not have actual contract cost data for TAM's Maryland Accessible Telecommunications program (MAT) until fiscal 2023 as cited in the analysis. Actuals from both of these programs over the next year will help us determine the affect on expenditure projections through 2027. We are not planning any programmatic changes at this time and will coordinate with MDOA to monitor expenditures and create a plan to address projected USTF revenue shortfalls by the fiscal 2024 submission.

2. As MDOD prepares to spend down the fund balance and substantially restructure the TAM program, the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) recommends that MDOD submit a report describing its progress implementing the planned programmatic changes, data indicating utilization of TAM services, and updated projections of USTF revenues and expenditures in the out-years.

MDOD concurs and will coordinate with MDOA to author the report by the due date indicated in the Operating Budget Recommended Actions.

Page 9 Key Observation 2:

1. MDOD should be prepared to provide an approximate estimate of Maryland Assistive Technology ReUse Center (MATR) expenditures in fiscal 2022 and 2023.

Equipment reuse activity is one of four (4) mandated state level activities of the federal AT Act that funds the Maryland Technology Assistance Program (MD TAP). The MATR Center is an innovative program established in January 2020 through a cooperative agreement with the Howard County Loan Closet for the purposes of assisting Marylanders with disabilities to obtain high-tech assistive technology devices. Program operation does not involve any state dollars and helps MDTAP satisfy the core equipment reuse activities required by the federal AT Act.

While the MATR Center is located in Howard County, it serves Marylanders statewide. MATR receives donations of gently used high-tech assistive technology devices, such as eye-gaze

systems, video magnifiers, communication devices, and more, and coordinates to repair, refurbish, clear, and clean all items before donating them back out to consumers who request them. MATR also collaborates with MDOA's durable medical equipment program to best serve the multiple needs of Marylanders with disabilities who require both assistive technology and durable medical equipment. Howard County Community College volunteers work to repair and refurbish the equipment before it is donated back out to consumers. No federal or state dollars are used to purchase the assistive technology equipment because it is a donation based program.

The sole MD TAP federal fund expenditure is the salary of one part-time MD TAP staff member who works approximately 16 hours per week on-site to support MATR Center functions related to our core reuse activity. These include one-on-one client consultations, equipment training and facilitating donations. The projected federal fund salary costs for this position in fiscal 2022 and 2023 is approximately \$32,000 per annum. There are no other estimated state or federal fund MATR expenditures to provide because they do not exist.

Page 10 Operating Budget Recommended Actions:

Adopt the following narrative and provide an Expenditures and Projected Balance Report of the Universal Services Trust Fund with the submission of the Governor's Fiscal 2024 Budget.

MDOD concurs and will coordinate with MDOA to author the report by the due date.