



Larry Hogan | Governor Boyd K. Rutherford | Lt. Governor Rona E. Kramer | Secretary

**Maryland Department of Aging
Fiscal Year 2023 Operating Budget Hearings
Response To Department of Legislative Services Analysis**

**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
Health And Human Services Subcommittee
Senator Melony Griffith, Chair
February 17, 2022**

**House Appropriations Committee
Health And Social Services Subcommittee
Delegate Kirill Reznik, Chair
Delegate Geraldine Valentino-Smith, Vice Chair
February 21, 2022**

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) analysis of the Maryland Department of Aging's (Department's) FY 2023 budget request. The Department extends its appreciation to the DLS analyst, Grace Pedersen, who reviewed the budget and programs. Ms. Pedersen's questions were thought provoking and insightful. The Department's response to the discussion items and the recommendations noted in the analysis are included below.

Discussion Items

1. MDOA should comment when it expects to expend the remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

The use of the funding is ongoing and will be appropriately utilized as needed during the federal project period. The Department expects the remaining ARPA funds to be expended in FY24, but per the Administration for Community Living have until September 30, 2024 (FY25) to fully utilize these funds.

2. DLS recommends committee narrative requesting that MDOA, in coordination with MDOD, submit a report on Senior Call Check program utilization and expenditures. This recommendation is included in the MDOD analysis.

The Department concurs and will coordinate with the Maryland Department of Disabilities to submit the report by the due date.

3. The Department should comment on its approach to improving equipment collections over the prior six months, whether it expects equipment collections to continue to grow at this rate, and how it plans to increase equipment distribution given the higher inventory.

Over the prior six months, equipment collections have improved significantly. This is due to an increase in the number of donation collection sites, improved internal efficiency of collection operations, and increased awareness of the program among the public and bulk donors. To increase awareness, the Department has created relationships with community organizations, such as The Lion's Clubs, Rotary Clubs, Orphan Grain Train, and A Community that Cares (ACTS), and non-profit organizations, such as Goodwill Inc., The Arc, Easter Seals, and Delmarva Community Services. Furthermore, the Department has made Maryland hospitals, assisted living facilities, independent living facilities, nursing homes, and senior living communities aware of the program and offered donation pick-up services for bulk donations.

The Department expects equipment collections to continue to grow at this rate given the continual improvement in the public awareness of the program and the addition of more equipment collection locations.

To increase equipment distribution, the Department plans to: enhance marketing efforts to the public, expand marketing efforts to improve program utilization among healthcare and rehabilitation professionals, increase the number of equipment distribution sites, and improve internal efficiency of the distribution process.

Specifically, the Department has met with hospital networks, such as Medstar, Lifebridge, and University of Maryland, to inform their rehabilitation professionals, case managers, and discharge planners of the program in order to improve program utilization. Additionally, the Department has developed a relationship with University of Maryland Rehabilitation and Orthopedic Institute (UMROI), formerly "Kernan Hospital," to offer our service to physical therapists and occupational therapists who regularly refer patients to the program.

The Department continues working with all Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and other State departments, such as Department of Disabilities, Department of Health, Department of Human Services, and Department of Veterans Affairs, to disseminate information for both collection and distribution. The program may require some broader advertisements to get to the maximum level of distribution that the program is capable of having.

Recommended Actions

1.) DLS recommends that \$3,000,000 of this appropriation made for the purpose of information and assistance may not be expended until the Maryland Department of Aging submits a report to the budget committees on its spending plan for the funds.

The Department respectfully requests that the funding not be restricted as recommended.

The Department recognizes that Information and Assistance (I&A), as the gateway to our service delivery system, is inextricably linked to our state programs -- Senior Care, Congregate Housing, and SALS. The Department and AAAs must do a better job at the front end to serve the rapidly growing aging population. I&A must be funded adequately to ensure the capacity to fully answer incoming calls, assess needs, and make referrals to appropriate programs.

A delay in funding would decrease the amount of time available to the AAAs to hire and fully utilize this funding. Right now, the process of hiring staff is very difficult in all fields and the Department wants to do everything it can to avoid further delays in bringing new staff onboard at the local level. The Department certainly understands the rationale for the request, and we will be able to provide this information either at our budget hearing or immediately thereafter in order to provide it to you with sufficient time to include the funding without restriction. The Department is hopeful that this information will satisfy your very reasonable questions and avoid any further delays in this very important expansion of service capability.

2.) To monitor waitlists during this period of enhanced program funding, DLS recommends adopting committee narrative requesting biannual reports of waitlist totals across the Department's programs and periodic updates describing how AAAs are utilizing the enhanced funding.

The Department concurs and will submit the reports by the due dates.

3.) To continue monitoring the CFL and DME Reuse programs, DLS recommends requesting biannual reports on program activities, participations, and expenditures.

The Department concurs and will submit the reports by the due dates.