



**Responses to the DLS FY 2023 Budget Analyses
January 26, 2022 (House Appropriations Committee)
January 28, 2022 (Senate Budget and Taxation Committee)**

Maryland Department of Health - Office of Health Care Quality

The Department thanks the Governor, the Department of Budget and Management, and the Budget Committees for their support in 2020 and in 2021 with COVID-19 response efforts. We thank the Department of Legislative Services for its insightful budget analysis.

Elimination of Turnover Adjustment, Vacancy Rate, and Employee Retention

DLS recommends an increase to the budgeted turnover for existing positions to 5%. This results in a \$1 million reduction to OHCQ's budget; however, it still allows for nearly \$800,000 in additional personnel expenditures above the fiscal 2022 working appropriation for hiring and retention (p. 5).

The Department respectfully disagrees with this recommendation and supports the Governor's budget as introduced. This turnover recommendation will result in OHCQ being unable to fill up to 12 vacant positions.

The Department is intensely focused on filling every personnel vacancy, especially at OHCQ in order to maximize the number of surveyors in the training pipeline. With the lifting of the statewide hiring freeze, OHCQ now has no administrative limitations on filling its vacant PINs. As training for these specialized surveyor roles requires up to one year, MDH has focused on continuous recruitment in order to maximize the probability of recruiting strong candidates and to allow for training cohorts of surveyors.

The Governor's budget, as introduced, focuses on maximizing the ability to hire qualified employees and to retain personnel. By increasing the budgeted turnover for existing positions to 5%, the DLS recommendation creates an artificial budget limit on hiring personnel. As the number of trained surveyors directly relates to the amount of oversight of facilities, fewer surveyors will result in less oversight of the quality of care provided at health care facilities. Fewer surveyors will decrease the number of surveys in nursing homes, assisted living, and developmental disabilities, as well as many other industries.

We maintain that cutting OHCQ's budget, instead of providing the resources MDH needs to ensure the timely licensure, certification, and survey activities at health care facilities, will impede MDH's ability to hire the professionals needed to protect the health and safety of Marylanders served by these providers.