Maryland
DEPARTMENT OF
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Wes Moore | Governor
Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor
Katie Savage | Acting Secretary

Department of Information Technology
Fiscal Year 2024 Capital Budget

TESTIMONY OF

Katie Savage, Acting Secretary

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

Capital Budget Subcommittee

The Honorable Craig J. Zucker, Chair

February 14, 2023

House Appropriations Committee

Capital Budget Subcommittee

The Honorable Mark S. Chang, Chair

February 15, 2023

Good afternoon, Chairman, and members of the committee. I am Katie Savage, Acting Secretary of the Maryland Department of Information Technology. I am joined today with Norman Farley, Chief of Public Safety Communications. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide this testimony to the committee. I would also like to thank Patrick Frank, our Department of Legislative Services Analyst, for his continued efforts and support.

The Department of Information Technology (DoIT) has one capital project to review, and that is the Maryland First Statewide Public Safety Communications System (MD FiRST). MD FiRST was designed to support law enforcement officers, emergency medical personnel, firefighters, emergency management, as well as regional and federal agency partners, reliably and safely during day-to-day operations, emergencies, and planned/unplanned events.

Each month, the MD FiRST system averages over 2.5 million “push to talks” from radio user transmissions. Additionally, the system now supports over 83,000 members of the Maryland public safety community, which includes approximately 29,000 primary and 54,000 interoperable users from over 100 different state, county, federal and neighboring state jurisdictions. All Maryland counties, Baltimore City, Annapolis and Ocean City, are either primary or interoperable users of the system. MD FiRST continues to grow and expand its adoption within the public safety community, meeting the goal of interoperable, mission critical voice communications throughout the State.

The last of five geographical implementation phases, which includes Montgomery, Prince George's, Calvert, Charles and St Mary's Counties, is scheduled to go-live for operational users in April of this year, completing the scope of the original MD FiRST project.

Work is also underway to migrate the first four phases to an ethernet backhaul network, increasing the systems overall resiliency. The preliminary design work for this effort was completed in September, and implementation planning is on-going. Additionally, the team has added backup power and redundant microwave and fiber paths to improve reliability of the network.

The MD FiRST project team continues to add new radio sites to the system as part of its Coverage Improvement Program. The goal of the Coverage Improvement Program is to address radio coverage gaps identified through testing and by operational users throughout the State. The program will add an additional 20 radio sites to the MD FiRST system between fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2028.

In 2022, new sites were added at Taylorsville and Sykesville in Carroll County, as well as at the Maryland State Police Barracks in LaVale (Allegany County). New sites in Davidsonville (Anne Arundel County), Greenbrier State Park (Washington County) and Swallow Falls (Garrett County) are in progress and scheduled to go live in 2023.

Our fiscal year 2024 capital budget request is for $18,440,000. This funding will support four major efforts: new radio sites, fiber, geographically diverse

control sites, and in-building amplifiers.

As part of the Coverage Improvement Program, four radio sites are planned to be added to the system beginning in fiscal year 2024 to improve public safety radio operations. The new sites are planned for the following locations:

- Cumberland (Allegany County)
- Patapsco State Park (Howard County)
- Queenstown (Queen Anne's County)
- Elmer School Road (Montgomery County)

The Patapsco and Queenstown sites are being built in partnership with the local county jurisdictions.

In fiscal year 2024, funding is introduced in this capital budget to expand the use of fiber optics to supplement or replace the reliance upon legacy microwave within the MD FiRST network which can pose system challenges during poor weather conditions such as storms and extreme heat.

Also introduced in fiscal year 2024, is funding to support the addition of Geographically Diverse Control Sites to the network. The MD FiRST system is comprised of 22 cells, each with a single primary site that is responsible for controlling and managing information for that specific cell, while also connecting that cell to the rest of the network. Adding a second and geographically located prime/control site within each cell provides redundancy in the event the primary controlling site is disabled due to planned or unplanned events including power and backhaul outages,

reducing the risk of a large-scale radio coverage outage directly impacting operational users. The budget request supports funding one geographically diverse control site to be added each year.

In-building amplifiers, referred to as Bi-Directional Amplifiers or "BDAs" are added to the fiscal year 2024 capital budget request to add supplemental radio coverage within and smaller, discrete geographic areas. BDAs can be implemented as a cost-effective solution to solve radio coverage gaps and/or enhance radio coverage in key areas including schools, state parks, tunnels and critical government buildings. The implementation of in-building amplifiers is an effort that involves coordination with many State and local entities working in tandem to identify and prioritize specific targets of opportunity. The budget request supports funding to add about four BDA sites each year.

DoIT is pleased that the Department of Legislation Services agrees with the Governor's recommendation to fund the fiscal year 2024 capital budget request. We thank the Committee for its consideration and ask that our FY 2024 Capital Budget request be approved. My staff and I stand ready to answer your questions.

Thank you.