

**STATEMENT OF RAFAEL LÓPEZ
SECRETARY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
BEFORE THE
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE
FY 2024 BUDGET
DHS CHILD SUPPORT ADMINISTRATION
THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 2023**

Testimony of Acting Secretary Rafael López

Good afternoon, Chairman Reznik and honorable members of the Committee. I am honored to be here with you representing the Department of Human Services (DHS). I want to thank the Governor, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and the Budget Committees for their support. We also thank the Department of Legislative Services for its insightful budget analysis, in particular our analyst Naomi Komuro.

In attendance representing the Department is Kevin Guistwite, Executive Director of the Child Support Administration; Carnitra White, Deputy Secretary for Programs, and Stafford Chipungu, our Chief Financial Officer. Also available to address any questions are Daniel Wait, Acting Deputy Secretary for Administration; Deputies for the Child Support Administration, Jarnice Johnson, Deputy Executive Director for Programs, and Christina Tabuteau, the Deputy Executive Director for Operations. In the spirit of continuously building strong partnerships with all of Maryland's jurisdictions, I am pleased to be joined by two Local Directors, Claudia Nelson from the Somerset County Department of Social Services, and Lisa Beeman, Director of Cecil County Department of Human Services. Below please find the Department's responses to the three (3) issues and one (1) recommended action.

The Child Support Administration (CSA) provides comprehensive child support services to approximately 189,000 children who were involved at some point in an active child support case during Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022. CSA is also responsible for establishing paternity for children born to unmarried parents; establishing, collecting, and distributing child and medical support obligations; the enforcement of past due support; and the accounting of child support payments which are made through the Department. CSA's mission is to make certain that children grow up receiving financial support from both parents, and that the family is able to maintain economic independence.

The Child Support Administration strives to make certain that children grow up receiving support from both parents, and that the family is able to maintain economic independence. This requires a focus on the whole family. Maryland's child support program cannot be siloed or standalone. Rather, it must be fully integrated into our human services programs and proactively interact with child welfare and family investment programs to ensure families are supported.

Through September 30, 2022, there have been 11,618 Non-Custodial Parents (NCP) enrolled in Non-Custodial Parent Employment Program (NPEP) outside of Baltimore City representing 26,809 cases. Of these cases, 16,362 cases had a payment distribution after enrollment in the program totaling distributions of \$217 million. The NPEP programs include the following:

- Baltimore City: STEPUp Program (Supporting, Training, and Employing Parents);
- Winning Fathers Program (Baltimore County);
- Job Network (Baltimore County);
- Parents as Partners Program (Caroline County);
- RISE Program: Re-Engaging Individuals through Successful Employment (Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot Counties);
- Young Fathers Employment Program (Talbot County);
- NETWorks: (Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester Counties); and,
- CAPE Program: (Washington County)

**Department of Human Services
Fiscal Year 2024 Operating Budget**

Response to the Department of Legislative Services Budget Analysis

**House Appropriations Committee
Health And Social Services Subcommittee
Chairman Kirill Reznik
Thursday, March 2, 2023**

**Child Support Administration (CSA)
N00H000**

Response to Issues

ISSUES #1: Page 8: Baltimore City Performance.

DHS should discuss whether a penalty was assessed for the missed minimum required service level.

Response to Issue: The Department did not assess a penalty for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2022. While Veritas missed the *Current Support Collections* performance goal the performance increased over FFY2021, and the goal was missed by only 1.57 percent. It is expected Veritas would have met the goal if not for the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic and rollout of the new Child Support Management System (CSMS).

While contempt hearings with the Baltimore City Courts resumed on March 6, 2022, many cases scheduled before that date had to be rescheduled due to the court's rolling back of available services during varying phases throughout the pandemic. The rescheduling of these cases caused delays in the enforcement of child support orders to obtain collections. Despite interruptions brought on by the pandemic, the Baltimore City Office of Child Support Services (BCOCS) continued to use all available federal and state enforcement tools. Also, the conversion to the new CSMS in July 2022 had an impact on performance during the data conversion, training, and stabilization stages.

BCOCS has routinely met three of the four performance goals annually as set by the Department including for FFY2022: *Cases with Support Order*, *Paternity Establishment*, and *Cases Paying Arrears*. In addition, BCOCS had the lowest overall undistributed collections (UDC) performance among the metro jurisdictions. UDC are the hardest collections to distribute to families due to missing key identifying information such as an address where the child support payments need to be sent. The Child Support Administration expects all counties to keep UDC under 1 percent of the prior year collections, for which Veritas has been consistently performing over the prior vendor's performance.

ISSUES #2: Page 12: Collections on Current and Overdue Support

The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) recommends adopting narrative requesting periodic reports on CSA's performance against the federal incentive objectives and utilization of the new CSMS.

Response to Issue: The Department concurs with the Analyst's recommendation requesting periodic reports on CSA's performance against the federal incentive objectives and utilization of the CSMS.

ISSUES #3: Page 12: Transition to New Child Services Data System

DHS should comment on the number of staff that have been trained and awaiting training as of January 1, 2023.

Response to Issue: All child support staffs and attorneys in all 24 Maryland jurisdictions were offered training by January 1, 2023. The Child Support Administration (CSA) and the Maryland Total Human-services Integrated Network (MD THINK) provided training for all child support staff using the new Child Support Management System (CSMS) prior to each phased rollout. By the statewide rollout in September 2022, 766 child support workers were trained throughout Maryland (see chart below).

Additionally, two weeks of refresher training sessions were provided prior to each phased rollout for all child support workers who had already received the new CSMS. These sessions provided updates on system changes made during each successive phased rollout to address defects and enhancements. Ongoing ad-hoc or refresher training is available as needed for child support workers upon request. New training is routinely provided to train all staff on newly added functionality.

Quick Reference Guides, 108 How-To Guides, and 63 e-learning videos remain available for all child support workers to continuously access. The guides are updated, and new guides created as needed. CSA is also working with the University of Maryland to develop training for new workers to complete upon hire that will incorporate the new CSMS in the training resources.

Jurisdiction	Number Trained	Jurisdiction	Number Trained
Allegany	15	Harford	36
Anne Arundel	49	Howard	21
Baltimore City	140	Kent	8
Baltimore County	66	Montgomery	47
Calvert	18	Prince George's	106
Caroline	17	Queen Annes	8
Carroll	26	Somerset	14
Cecil	11	St. Mary's	25
Charles	21	Talbot	9
Dorchester	14	Washington	24
Frederick	40	Wicomico	21
Garrett	16	Worcester	14
Total Trained			766

Responses to Recommended Actions

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Pages 15

1. Adopt committee narrative requesting that DHS submit three reports on performance using data as of June 30, 2023; September 30, 2023; and December 31, 2023.

Reports Due Date

August 15, 2023

November 15, 2023

February 15, 2024

Response: The Department concurs with the Analyst's recommendation to submit three requested reports on performance.