



# **Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission**

## **Fiscal Year 2024 Operating Budget**

### **Response to Department of Legislative Services Analysis**

#### **MARYLAND SENATE**

**Budget and Taxation Committee**

**Education, Business and Administration**

**Senator Nancy King, Chair**

**February 24, 2023**

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#### **MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**

**Appropriations Committee**

**Education and Economic Development**

**Delegate Stephanie M. Smith, Chair**

**February 22, 2023**

## Introduction: highlights of the year

The entire team at Maryland Public Television would like to appear at this budget hearing in person so that all their voices could blend with mine in conveying sincere thanks to the State of Maryland for the capital appropriation that resulted in the 2022 grand opening of a new production studio on our campus.

That opening did not occur without a substantial amount of help from this body, from the Maryland Department of General Services, the Department of Budget and Management, and our own engineering, production and facilities personnel. This latter group alone had the arduous task of installing 120 feet of wall-mounted wire trough and adding thousands of connectors to 17,000 feet of video cable, 12,000 feet of audio cable, 5,000 feet of fiber and 7,000 feet of ethernet. This was in addition to hanging more than 200 studio lights and then installing and testing numerous racks of equipment. By April 2022, the work was done, and we were able to mark the studio's official inauguration.

Maryland Public Television now has an extraordinary facility in which our talented team can create amazing productions, stage engaging community events and political debates, convene concerts and other performances, and make our first-class studio widely available for independent producers. In short, while we're pleased with what took place over the past years to get this facility ready, we're positively delighted with what's in store for the studio in the years ahead.

An extraordinary facility having its debut at MPT in 2022 had its programming parallel in the debut of two remarkable films – they, too, funded by the State of Maryland.

PBS and Maryland Public Television earlier announced the production of two new documentaries (produced by Academy Award nominee and filmmaker Stanley Nelson) for a debut in the fall of 2022. ***Becoming Frederick Douglass*** and ***Harriet Tubman: Visions of Freedom*** were distributed nationally, delivering fresh perspectives into these iconic historical figures.

***Harriet Tubman Visions of Freedom*** was seen by roughly two million viewers who tuned in to one of 2,234 separate broadcasts nationwide. In fact, 97 percent of stations in the top 100 U.S. markets aired the program. ***Becoming Frederick Douglass*** attracted more than 1.5 million viewers through 2,274 separate broadcasts across the country. It, too, aired in 97 percent of the top 100 U.S. markets

These statistics reflect airings that took place in the first three months from the programs' October 2022 premieres. Additional broadcasts and community events are scheduled this winter and spring.

## By the numbers

As organizations everywhere emerged from a pandemic-impacted business focus, MPT, too, re-approached business as usual with some impressive results. Foremost among these in FY22 were:

*Membership* – 70,961 voluntary paid members (a record 21,296 of them monthly sustainers)

*Viewing* – 1.2 million monthly viewers on our top two channels

*Revenue* – ranking 12<sup>th</sup> in revenue among 151 PBS member stations

*Awards* – climbed to 192 in earned regional Emmy Awards since the network's founding in 1969 (including 4 national Emmy Awards)

*Website pageviews* – 2.36 million views of our primary website, *mpt.org*

*MPT in the news* – 465 separate items of news coverage about MPT during the year

*Engagement* – 28,611 individuals attending 53 separate virtual and in-person events

### **Delivering content**

MPT prides itself on being Maryland's best storyteller and journalistic reporter of the people and events that matter to our citizens. These are the primary FY22 statistics that evidence of MPT's productivity in the last fiscal year:

*Local productions* - 126 programs accounting for 64 viewing hours of content

*Local acquisitions* - 28 programs accounting for 35 viewing hours of content

*National productions* – 4 series, 64 separate episodes accounting for 32 viewing hours of content

*National presentations* – 5 series/specials, 14 separate programs over 9 viewing hours of content

### **Coverage of the Maryland sporting events**

MPT offered more than 12 live and recorded broadcast hours of international equestrian competition last October when the second annual Maryland 5 Star competition was staged at Fair Hill in Cecil County. In partnership with the Maryland 5 Star organization, MPT both broadcast and livestreamed its coverage of the event, one of only two equestrian events of its kind in the United States and among seven worldwide. Similarly, MPT introduced Maryland viewers to the 2022 Maryland Cycling Classic in September 2022 with coverage of that event.

### **Education achievements**

MPT was founded upon the principles of lifelong learning, and education is woven deeply into the fabric of our efforts. Regarded as a trusted partner in education, in FY22, MPT continued to bring high-quality instructional content, programs, and media to PreK-12 educators, schools, families, and communities in Maryland and beyond. In a broad array of services and products, MPT provided interactive resources for the classroom, quality educational videos, engaging online courses to support local educators and child care providers, and rewarding professional development opportunities to inspire teaching.

#### *Early childhood education*

*Thinkport.org*, MPT's free PreK-12 education website, continued to serve as the gateway to this broad collection of digital content for teaching and learning. In FY22, online digital toolkits curated for both educators and parents led to rich resource collections of articles, websites, tips, and strategies that supported social and emotional well-being in homes, classrooms, child care facilities, and beyond.

*Summer On!* featured a 10-week, theme-based activity collection that combined fun and learning while children day-camped from home. Camp Counselor Krissy introduced parents and caregivers of children ages 2-8 to dozens of screen-free summer games and hands-on activities.

*Early Learning Social* provided a virtual space for early childhood educators to engage in peer-to-peer support and learning. On the first Thursday of each month, this professional development and networking series featured free, credit-bearing opportunities to learn, discuss, and share experiences and resources together.

*Early Learning Social* debuted in January 2021 and offered 16 free, MSDE-approved continuing education clock hours to 365 participants who joined events held throughout the calendar year. In 2022, the offer expanded to 24 clock hours across the 12 events. Responding to feedback from participants who joined events during the first year of service, the 2022 events deliver a quarterly rotation of media literacy workshops; virtual MPT-PBS Edcamps; and explorations of diversity, equity, and inclusion using PBS KIDS content and resources.

### *Media literacy*

Media literacy continued to be a major focus during FY22, in line with MPT's measured and ongoing commitment to supporting early educators, parents, and caregivers in taking charge of media's impact and influence on children's learning and development. Through online courses, workshops, and digital resources, in FY22 MPT shared skills and strategies in media literacy grounded in best practices. Activities included:

*At-Home Learning* resources and activities aligned hands-on learning activities with content aired on MPT's broadcast channels and made available for on-demand viewing online. MPT's At-Home Learning initiative was launched in April 2020 and continued throughout FY22 in response to sustained demand from parents and child care providers seeking assistance in creating lessons using best practices in media literacy.

*Learning in a Box* and *Bedtime in a Box* resource kits were distributed to 100 families in Frederick County through a collaboration between MPT, the Baltimore-based nonprofit Improving Education, and the Family Partnership within the Frederick County Government's Citizen Services Division, with support from the Delaplaine Foundation. Each box included valuable learning materials for children from birth through age six and was provided in both English and Spanish.

*Media Literacy for Early Childhood Professionals*, a virtual hybrid professional development course that uses self-paced lessons and synchronous workshops to teach early educators how to plan thoughtful, developmentally appropriate ways to use media and technology to foster active learning with young children. The course was piloted in FY22 and officially launched early in the next fiscal year. During the week-long course, participants earn six MSDE-approved Core of Knowledge clock hours required for licensure as well as valuable knowledge and skills to help create state-required screen time plans.

*Early Learning Media Ambassadors (ELMA)*, an initiative to recruit and train early childhood educators within communities across Maryland to model best practices for teaching and learning with educational media in early childhood programs and support school readiness. Significant outreach was made throughout FY22 to establish partnerships with libraries and education-focused organizations throughout the state in anticipation of ELMA's initial launch in early FY23 and continued roll-out in the years to come.

### *K-12 Content and Services*

Throughout FY22, MPT worked to support teachers with high-quality digital resources that provide interactive and engaging ways for students to learn inside classrooms and beyond. Through collaborative partnerships with organizations such as Maryland Humanities and education media producer FableVision, MPT has developed a powerful collection of learning resources focused on topics in civics and history as part of the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS)

program. Projects creatively engage students in civics topics through inquiry and evidence-based reasoning, while applying critical thinking and analysis skills to historical materials.

*TPS Inquiry Kits* offered students collections of curated primary sources in more than 200 history and civics topics to use in beginning a research project. A series of self-paced lessons led students through the research process as they analyzed historical materials from the Library of Congress.

*Civics! An American Musical* opened the curtain for middle grade students to produce the next Hamilton musical as they adapted true events from U.S. history to the big stage in a gamified interactive.

*Case Maker* took students into investigation mode as they searched for evidence in primary sources to prove their case in a civics-based challenge.

### *Online learning*

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) partnered with MPT education to produce online courses for Maryland students and teachers. The pandemic revealed a gap in virtual learning resources and, as a result, MSDE tapped MPT to produce eight new high-quality online learning courses designed for both students and teachers.

These new offerings included six full-year courses designed for students of various grade levels in both online and blended learning environments covering subject areas including social studies, science, math, and foreign languages as well as two new professional development courses for elementary and secondary public school teachers to update content knowledge and pedagogical approaches to critical health topics.

MPT was tasked with creating these courses in part due to its expertise in online learning as demonstrated by years of professional development support. Since the earliest days of online learning, MPT has offered teachers and child care providers credit-bearing courses to maintain their professional licenses and credentials.

In FY22, nearly 1,000 adult learners enrolled in professional development courses through MPT's education service, *Thinkport*, in sessions held throughout the year. And they found the experience worthwhile, too, as surveys revealed 98% of online learners reported finding the courses to be effective in meeting their needs and an equal percentage indicated they were "very likely" to enroll in another *Thinkport* online professional development course.

### **Growing voluntary support for Maryland's only statewide broadcaster**

The cultivation of new members ramped up with FY22 work to enlist at least 70,000 paid members by the fiscal year's end. The membership tally reached 70,961 by June 30, 2022. Fully 21,296 of these members opted to be "sustainers," providing a monthly donation to ensure a steady stream of membership revenue to MPT.

Similarly, the team on MPT's Major & Planned Giving unit produced an increased amount of revenue in FY22 grants and bequests. Grants were made by 14 generous foundations, endowments, and



corporate entities. Even donors of used vehicles added to MPT revenue derived from the sale of 93 cars and trucks, contributed to MPT by individuals during FY22.

**Maryland State Ad Agency: important messages effectively delivered**

Launched in 2019 as a service for State of Maryland agencies and governmental units, the Maryland State Ad Agency (MSAA) division of MPT achieved remarkable milestones in both the number of clients served and campaigns conducted in FY22. In all, MSAA conducted 19 separate advertising campaigns for 15 clients, including the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Maryland Department of Health, the Maryland Higher Education Commission, the Maryland State Police, and others.

**Production Services furnishes legislative session coverage**

Each year's coverage of a Maryland General Assembly session includes MPT's reporting on the weekly series *State Circle* where the analysis is cogent and comprehensive on the part of anchor Jeff Salkin and Annapolis correspondents Sue Kopen, Charles Robinson, and Nancy Yamada.

But an equally important Maryland General Assembly focus is the significant work-for-hire performance on the part of the Production Services team that in FY22 delivered on 90 days of streaming of proceedings from the Maryland Senate and House of Delegates chambers. MPT provided the technical expertise, staffing, and execution over a span of 13 hours daily. The sessions were viewed on the Maryland General Assembly's website.

**Analyst recommendation**

MPT agrees with the analyst's concurrence with the Governor's allowance for the Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission (R15P00) for FY24.

**Submitted by:**

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Maryland Public Television / Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission

February 20, 2023