

**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGING
FISCAL YEAR 2025 OPERATING BUDGET HEARINGS
RESPONSE TO DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES ANALYSIS**

**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE
Delegate Emily K. Shetty, Chair
Delegate Dana Jones, Vice-Chair**

February 1, 2024

**SENATE BUDGET & TAXATION COMMITTEE
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE
Senator Cory V. McCray, Chair**

February 9, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today as you review the proposed operating budget for the Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) for fiscal year 2025. We thank our assigned DLS analyst, Ms. Naomi Komuro, for her thoughtful and thorough analysis.

Agency Response

Page 2 - Fiscal 2024 - Implementation of Legislative Priorities:

MDOA issued timely grant agreements to these four grantees for the specified award amounts. Three agreements were executed in August, 2023, one in September, 2023. Upon notice of the funding for FY24, MDOA engaged with each organization to receive a budget and narrative to ensure proper use of the funds. Grant agreements were executed in August and September 2023, effective July 1, 2023, and grant activities commenced. Funding has been issued as a result of the receipt and processing of requests for funds for quarter 1 of FY2024 in fall 2023. Quarter 2 requests for funds are currently being processed for payment. All of these grants are on pace to be fully expended by the end of FY2024.

Page 3 - Task Force on Preventing and Countering Elder Abuse:

MDOA did not re-allocate any existing appropriation to support this program, its support is being provided on existing staff time by the full-time MDOA Elder Rights Program Manager.



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MDOA staff serves as the support to this Task Force but does not serve as chair. The establishment of the Task Force included the Department securing designees for 10 members, not including MDOA, and the appointment of representatives for 11 members by the Governor through the Governor's Appointments Office. This process was extensive and delayed the actual start of Task Force meetings until late 2023. In December, 2023, the task force chair requested and received an extension on the first report requirement until April 15, 2024. As of late January, this task force had held two official meetings, the most recent being January 19, 2024, where significant planning work was concluded by its members.

Page 9 - Vacancies and New Positions:

Under the Moore-Miller administration, MDOA has made significant efforts to redefine and reclass positions, promote from within, and reduce the Department's vacancy rate. In April 2023, the Department had a vacancy rate of 26.8% and had that reduced to as low as 15% in 2023. Currently, the Department has seven vacancies, with three of those being in the last two months as staff members moved to other state agencies. Since the beginning of the Administration, MDoA has promoted six staff members and successfully hired 19 merit and contractual staff members during that time frame.

The Department continues to heavily engage with DBM HR staff and has weekly meetings to drive its recruitment efforts. The Department has been assigned a highly experienced HR Administrator who oversees two HR staff. This team, which also includes DBM supervisors, continues to drive recruitment for the Department ensuring all possible efforts are made to fill vacancies. Each time there is a vacancy, the Department analyzes the position to determine if it is properly structured to meet its current needs. The Department does not just fill positions to fill positions.

As noted, the Department has two long-term vacancies, one the sole Procurement Officer position within the Department, and the other the Program Monitor position. Both have been recruited for multiple times.

Regarding the Procurement Officer position, the Department determined it was important this position be classed in the Procurement Officer job classification as it is solely responsible for managing the entire Department's procurements. The position was reclassified to Procurement



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Officer I, but the recruitment failed and resulted in no viable candidates. After speaking with a staff member of the Department of General Services procurement office, the Department worked with DBM and reclassified the position to Procurement Officer II. This recruitment was more successful and MDOA is in the process of finalizing an offer to make to the selected candidate.

The Department's Program Monitor position fills an important role in the Department as it monitors all program activities of the 19 local area agencies on aging and other grant recipients of state and federal grant funding. Recruitments for this position have failed to provide an acceptable candidate. In response, the position vacancy announcement is being revised to attract appropriate candidates to apply. In the meantime, the activities of this position continue to be filled by other team members, including the Assistant Secretary of Grants Administration, so that the work does not fall behind.

MDOA is pleased to have two new merit positions in the fiscal 2025 Governor's Allowance. It anticipates these two positions will support both the Longevity-Ready Maryland Initiative and department-wide functions. We note that the Longevity-Ready Maryland Initiative, and these two additional roles, easily fulfill MDOA's long-time statutory mandates under federal and state law as the State Unit on Aging to plan for Maryland's rapidly growing older adult population.

Page 12 - DLS Recommendation to adopt committee narrative requesting an update from MDOA on Senior Care participation and costs, including the adequacy of current funding:

MDOA concurs with this recommendation.

Page 17 - Dementia Care Program Implementation:

Due to its importance, MDOA began this statutorily mandated work early utilizing available ARPA funds to create the full-time Cognitive and Behavioral Health Specialist position early, in fiscal 2024. The Cognitive and Behavioral Health Specialist began work full time on July 19, 2023, nearly one entire year earlier than envisioned by SB226 of 2023 (which mandated this position's creation, with funding beginning in fiscal 2025). This role is focused on expanding



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services that build the dementia capability of the aging services network in collaboration with Area Agencies on Aging, peer state agencies and other partners. The Cognitive and Behavioral Health Specialist is working closely with Area Agencies on Aging leadership and their staff working as part of the Maryland Access Point program, to provide consultation, technical assistance, and oversight for the establishment and ongoing delivery of dementia care navigation services. The specialist is engaged in extensive networking with others in the provider and advocacy community, including the Mental Health Association of Maryland and Alzheimer's Association of Maryland. He is actively involved and functions as the MDOA representative with several state commissions, including the Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer's Disease & Related Dementias Council and Maryland Behavioral Health Advisory Council.

Page 18 - DLS Recommendation to adopt committee narrative requesting that MDOA provide an update on Longevity-Ready Maryland spending and goals prior to the interim report submission:

MDOA concurs with this recommendation.