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MILITARY DEPARTMENT
FIFTH REGIMENT ARMORY
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201-2288

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MAJOR GENERAL
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

Maryland Military Department
Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget
Response to Department of Legislative Services Analysis

Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
Health and Human Services Sub-Committee
Senator Cory V. McCray, Chair
February 2, 2024

House Appropriations Committee
Public Safety & Administration Sub-Committee
Delegate Jazz Lewis, Chair
February 1, 2024

Honorable Chair and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, my name is Major General Janeen L. Birckhead, and I serve as The Adjutant General of Maryland, and the commander of the Maryland National Guard. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today as you review the proposed operating budget for the Maryland Military Department (MMD) for fiscal year 2025. Our department thanks Governor Moore, Lieutenant Governor Miller, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and the Budget Committees for their support, and our assigned DLS analyst, Ms. Yashodhara Rai, for her thorough analysis.

Agency Response

Page 5, Observation 1

Of the 23 vacancies reported as of December 31, 2023, 3 positions have been vacant for more than 12 months, and 20 positions have been vacant for less than 9 months. The department should comment on the primary areas of the vacancies, how these vacancies may be affecting operations, and its plan to further improve recruitment and retention.

Freestate Challenge Academy (FCA): Due to six vacancies, FCA requires augmentation by MDNG members in State Active Duty (SAD) status to safely conduct cadet classes. Two "MIL Youth Worker I" positions are at the interview process. The "MIL Youth Worker II" vacancy is pending a response to an offer. The Human Resource Office will re-advertise Two "MIL Youth Worker Lead" positions. The final vacancy in FCA is a "HR Officer" position, reclassified to a Maintenance position, which is pending advertisement upon reclassification.

Installations: Installations is experiencing shortfalls in maintenance, repair to facilities, environmental work, and security functions due to nine vacancies. Two "Maintenance Chief II (Plumber)" vacancies are pending interviews.

A “Maintenance Chief I (HVAC)” vacancy is in the interview process. A “Maintenance Chief II (HVAC)” vacancy requires advertisement. An “Env Spec II” vacancy and an “Agency Project Enger-Arc” vacancy are pending interviews. An “Env Media” vacancy is in the reclassification process. “Maintenance Supervisor II” and “Building Security Officer” vacancies are on hold pending termination appeals.

Honor Guard: Two vacancies are currently advertised. The program manager is scheduling interviews with six candidates.

Human Resources: Three vacancies impact MMD’s ability to fill other vacancies throughout the department and provide HR services to its workforce. A proposed selectee will soon receive an offer letter for the “HR Officer II” vacancy. We are screening applications for interviews for the “HR Timekeeper Trainee” position. The “HR Director” position is reclassified and pending advertisement.

Procurement & Logistics: Filling two vacancies aids the agency in managing its aging fleet of state vehicles and monitoring contracts more effectively. The selectee for the “Procurement Officer I” position in-processes on February 7th. The proposed selection for the “Administrative Officer I” position is under review by senior leadership.

Recruiting and Retention: Considering the high level of competition in the current labor market, and compared to other state agencies, MMD’s recruiting and retention efforts over this past year have been effective. MMD started 2023 with 41 vacancies and finished the year with 23.

The first part of MMD’s recruiting and retention plan is to rebuild its HR team. The three current vacancies in the MMD HR Office were created when the former employees were hired by another state agency in quick succession. MMD plans to rapidly fill these HR positions with the right candidates to serve as critical employees enabling the agency’s wider recruiting and retention efforts.

Since October 2023, MMD has participated in the Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation’s “Service Year Option” program. MMD accepted seven contractual interns, six in maintenance trades and one in information technology. As appropriate and considering our financial posture, MMD plans to tender permanent employment upon the conclusion of their internships in August 2024.

MMD will continue to participate in MD Department of Labor-organized Job Fairs and hiring events as well as advertise its hard-to-fill vacancies through various online platforms.

New hires joined MMD at higher starting salaries than previously possible and MMD’s 2024 retention plan focuses on resolving pay equity gaps between new hires and legacy employees. MMD will review each legacy employee carefully and adjust salaries upward where possible. MMD may continue converting contractual FCA positions to merit positions to increase retention and resolve the historic, chronic vacancies in this critical program.

Page 5, Observation 2:

In fiscal 2023, 13 firefighters were transferred from the Military Department to the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), which did not involve the transfer of authorized positions from the Military Department to MDOT. The transferred firefighters appear as new positions in MDOT, while the Military Department positions used for the

firefighters were reclassified into other positions within the department. The department should comment on where in the department the positions were transferred, the functions of the positions, and whether these positions are currently vacant or filled.

MMD reclassified these thirteen PINs to support critical functions within the agency. Four are assigned to MMD's FCA to create better outcomes for at-risk Maryland youth. Two are assigned to O&M Project Manager positions to help maintain and repair MMD's aging infrastructure. The remaining PINs are integrated into agency functions where MMD had either limited or no capacity: Public Affairs, IT, Legislative & Government Affairs, Museum, and AAG. Twelve positions are filled and one is in the interview process. Please see the table below.

Former Firefighter PIN	Reclassified Position	Reclassified Organizational Assignment	Reclassified Position Function	Fill Status
84528	MIL Youth Worker I	Freestate ChalleNGe	ChalleNGe Cadre	Interview Process
61801	Agency Project Engr-Arch III	Installations - Maintenance	O&M Project Manager	Filled
61814	Admin Spec III	MMD Museum	Museum Archivist	Filled
61799	MIL Youth Counselor Program Supervisor	Freestate ChalleNGe	ChalleNGe Youth Mentor Coordinator	Filled
61797	MIL Youth Worker I	Freestate ChalleNGe	ChalleNGe Cadre	Filled
84547	Asst Adjutant General	OTAG	Deputy Adjutant General	Filled
84506	IT Asst Director III	IT Section	IT Director	Filled
61796	Admin Officer III	Legislative & Government Affairs	Legislative Program Specialist	Filled
84520	Program Manager I	Public Affairs	Public Affairs Manager	Filled
84502	OAG - Military	NOT MMD - PIN Transferred to OAG	MMD Principal Counsel	Filled
61806	Building Security Officer I	Installations - Baltimore Enclave	Fifth Regt Armory Security	Filled
84515	MIL Youth Counselor I	Freestate ChalleNGe	ChalleNGe Youth Counselor	Filled
84545	Agency Project Engr-Arch III	Installations - Maintenance	O&M Project Manager	Filled

Page 10, Observation 1:

The department should comment on their plan to increase participation in the Healthcare for Heroes program.

The Healthcare for Heroes program staff recently retooled and implemented a plan to increase the participation of traditional MDNG members in the program through the remainder of FY2024 and into FY2025. Only traditional (part-time) service members of the MDNG are eligible for reimbursements under the Healthcare for Heroes program. Limited engagement with our traditional Guard members necessitates additional effort to contact and register eligible personnel. Our full-time Active Guard Reserve (AGR) members and Military Technicians are ineligible for this program.

Page 10, Observation 2:

The Department of Legislative Services recommends adopting committee narrative to request a report on program implementation, program participation including the participation rate, how it plans to increase program participation, and average grant amounts for fiscal 2024 and 2025.

MMD concurs with this recommendation and will coordinate to submit the report by the due date.