

Maryland Department of Emergency Management  
Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget  
Response to the Department of Legislative Services Analysis

Appropriations Committee  
Public Safety and Administration Subcommittee  
Delegate Jazz Lewis, Chair  
Wednesday, February 14, 2023

### Introduction

The Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) appreciates this opportunity to update the Committee on the activities of the Department and to respond to the recommendations and requested updates contained in the Operating Budget analysis prepared by the Department of Legislative Services (DLS).

### Department Response to DLS Analysis

#### Operating Budget Summary

##### Personnel Data

- *MDEM should comment on any operational impacts experienced from vacancies in the first half of fiscal 2024 (DLS Analysis, p. 8).*

We acknowledge the interest of the Legislature on the status of hiring and retention across State Government, and we share the Governor's desire to rebuild State Government. To that end, MDEM has filled 37 positions through the recruitment process since July 2023. This is a significant percentage of the total positions at the Department. This includes the hiring of Maryland's first Chief Resilience Officer, a new Executive Director of the Maryland 9-1-1 Board, and filling out the Cybersecurity Preparedness Unit.

A number of the hired positions were new in FY24 for new or expanding programs and caused limited- to no operational impacts as of now. There

would be operational impacts if these positions were eliminated or remain vacant.

Six of our current vacancies are in the Maryland Joint Operations Center (MJOC) unit within the Department. The MJOC serves as the State's emergency management watch and coordination center, and is a 24/7/365 operation. Like other emergency services entities, MDEM has been challenged to recruit and maintain personnel for our watch center. The MJOC requires rotational shift work and requires overtime when the Center is understaffed which makes these positions difficult to fill and retain. It is a testament to the dedicated employees of the MJOC that we have experienced zero downtime despite the vacancies. As we consider the future of watch center operations in Maryland, we will work closely with DBM to assess job classifications, compensation, and other factors that impact recruitment and retention for a critical part of MDEM's mission.

Additional vacancies include long-term vacancies in the Maryland 9-1-1 Board which are currently in the process of hiring after bringing on the new Executive Director this past fall. After fully assessing the Board's staffing needs and updating positions as appropriate to meet new demands of the 9-1-1 Board, several positions are in the process of hiring at the time of this report.

MDEM recognizes there is continued work to do with both hiring and retention within the Department, and we share the Governor's commitment to lowering our vacancy rate.

- *MDEM should discuss the number of positions needed for the State Disaster Recovery Division and the timeline and method for adding new positions for the new program (DLS Analysis, p. 8).*

The State Disaster Recovery Fund (SDRF) is a new program which will require administrative and strategic planning to be conducted. This includes determining program needs, eligibility criteria, distribution mechanisms, and establishing agreements with partner agencies as appropriate. MDEM has reassigned a vacant PIN to begin this process, and we anticipate additional

program support being provided by existing staff. We will continue to assess future needs as the SDRF is developed.

## Key Observations

### 1. Resilient Maryland Revolving Loan Fund

- *MDEM should provide an update on the timing of STORM Act funding receipt and on federal funding allocations among local projects, considering the total requested funding was not awarded (DLS analysis, p. 11).*

As of February 8, MDEM has not yet received STORM Act funds from the Federal Government. FEMA continues to advise that Safeguarding Tomorrow grant awards will be issued upon the full execution of the Terms and Conditions. FEMA recently delayed the release of the terms and conditions, which were expected to be released in January. FEMA has not provided any updated timelines as of the date of this report.

- *The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) recommends adopting committee narrative requesting a report updating the budget committees on the status of STORM Act funding distribution, technical assistance provided to local governments in developing project applications, project funding applications received from local governments, and special fund revenue and repayment schedules of loans made through the RMRLF (DLS analysis, p. 11).*

MDEM acknowledges this recommendation and will provide information on the loan programs as requested by the Committee.

### 2. Cybersecurity Preparedness Unit and Local Cybersecurity Support Fund

- *DLS recommends adopting committee narrative requesting a report updating the budget committees on the status of SLCGP funding distribution and use of general funds in the Local Cybersecurity Support Fund, including the distribution of grant applicants and grant awards by jurisdiction and a brief description of each project (DLS Analysis, p. 11).*

The Department acknowledges this recommendation and will provide information on the grant programs as requested by the Committee.