



STATE OF MARYLAND
MARYLAND STATE POLICE
1201 REISTERSTOWN ROAD
PIKESVILLE, MARYLAND 21208-3899
410-486-3101
TOLL FREE: 1-800-525-555
TDD: 410-486-0677



WES MOORE
GOVERNOR

ARUNA MILLER
LT. GOVERNOR

**COLONEL
ROLAND L. BUTLER, JR.**
SUPERINTENDENT

January 29, 2024

House Appropriations Committee
Public Safety & Admin. Subcommittee
Delegate Jazz Lewis, Chair
Delegate Julian Ivey, Vice Chair

Subject: 410101 - Written Testimony – MEMSOF Operating Budget Fiscal 2025 - Maryland State Police Aviation Command

The Maryland State Police Aviation Command (MSPAC) has remained the leading public safety organization in essential statewide aviation services to the citizenry of Maryland for the past 53 years. Its mission to protect and improve the quality of life is accomplished through the airborne delivery of emergency medical, law enforcement, search and rescue, homeland security and disaster assessment services. The MSPAC operates 10 Leonardo AW139 helicopters and one fixed-wing aircraft from seven strategically-placed bases throughout the State 24-hours a day, seven days a week. All helicopters are dispatched from a central operational control center staffed by dedicated State Police and Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems certified communications specialists. In October 2020, an independent study of MSPAC's basing structure, the strategic locations of the seven bases and the integrated emergency medical system within which the helicopters operate resulted in an outstanding response rate of at least 95 percent and an ability to be on-scene within 25 minutes.

The MSPAC continues to capitalize on its multi-mission capability by combining the superior performance of the AW139 helicopter and our dedicated and highly-skilled personnel. In 2023, the MSPAC, with the support of its pilots, trooper/flight paramedics and maintenance technicians, safely completed 1,916 scene medevacs, flying 1,956 patients; responded to 141 law enforcement missions, flew 174 search and rescue missions; and completed 18 hoist/aerial rescue operations, rescuing 18 victims. MSPAC aircraft logged more than 2,438 flight hours in support of the Agency's missions.

In May of 2023, the Maryland State Police Aviation Command began carrying Whole Blood on each of its seven helicopters, instituting the first state-wide program of this type in the United States. This new capability was as a result of years of work by a collaborative team from MSPAC, University of Maryland Shock Trauma, and the University of Maryland Medical Center Blood Bank. Each helicopter is equipped with two units of Low Titer O+ Whole Blood and is available to treat critically injured patients with significant blood loss prior to arriving at a trauma center. The impact of transfusing Whole Blood has been remarkable for 63 patients transported between May and the end 2023. Several lives have been saved as a result of receiving Whole Blood in the field.

"Maryland's Finest"

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The MSPAC applauds the hard work of the MEMSOF Coalition, the Emergency Medical Services Board, the Department of Budget and Management and the Department of Legislative Services in its preparation and analysis of the budget before you today. The MSPAC, along with its partners, acknowledges the forecasted insolvency of the MEMSOF and intends to maximize the resources provided in the FY 2025 budget in order to continue its commitment to excellence when providing airborne public safety aviation services to the citizenry of Maryland.

Should the MEMSOF become insolvent, the MSP would need to seek a supplemental funding source to support the program. If the MSPAC was no longer able to fulfill its medically oriented mission, EMS providers would be forced to transport trauma patients by ground ambulance, long distances, or utilize commercial air ambulances to area specialty trauma centers. Costs associated with these commercial helicopter services would then be the responsibility of patients and insurance providers. Currently, there is no charge to patients for MSPAC's helicopter transport services. In addition, there are currently no statewide supplemental aerial search and rescue providers as well as no other aerial hoisting rescue services in the State of Maryland. Without this component of MSPAC's program, the state of Maryland and EMS ground providers would need to develop new rescue protocols to reach injured and trapped patients on Maryland's waterways and mountainous terrain.

Over the past 53 years, the MSPAC has transported over 165,000 patients to area trauma facilities saving countless lives. Continued support of MEMSOF funding ensures MSPAC personnel and aircraft will be available to support EMS ground providers and the entire Maryland EMS System.

Respectfully,



Major M. R. Tagliaferri
Aviation Command
Maryland Department of State Police