



Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy

Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget

Response to Department of Legislative Services Analysis

House Appropriations Committee

Public Safety & Administration Subcommittee Delegate Jazz Lewis, Chair

February 20, 2025

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

Public Safety, Transportation & Environment Subcommittee

Senator Michael A. Jackson, Chair

March 3, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee today as you review the proposed operating budget for the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP) for fiscal year 2026. We thank our assigned DLS analyst, Madelyn Miller, for her thoughtful and thorough analysis.

I would like to start by introducing the panel with me today, our CFO and our legislation and policy director. I am grateful to our management team who are all committed to rebuilding GOCPP and serving as a coordinating office that advises the Governor on criminal justice strategies.

A significant part of GOCPP's work is making grant awards to law enforcement, victims, and children serving organizations. We are committed to awarding these funds fairly, equitably, and in accordance with the Governor's public safety priorities. As you know, one of the largest grants GOCPP administers is the Victims of Crime Act or VOCA.

The VOCA program seeks to provide victims of crime with assistance and services to support their restoration following a violent crime and to help them navigate the criminal justice process.

In FY 25, GOCPP released the VOCA NOFA making the process 100% competitive for the first time in 6 years. This allowed GOCPP to fund programs addressing the most critical victims' needs statewide, provide increased funding for existing grantees demonstrating innovative services and/or a need for expanded services, and fund new grantees/programs to address immediate victims' needs. GOCPP received a total of 147 applications requesting over \$82 million, with \$60 million available in funding. GOCPP made VOCA awards on time for the first time in many years. We have already released the FY 26 VOCA NOFA, which is significantly earlier than last year. The VOCA application process is 100% competitive again this year.

- 1. GOCPP should comment on its MFR reorganization and its exclusion of measures specific to the agency's impact on preventing crime and reducing recidivism in Maryland. Page 6**

Agency Response:

- GOCPP refocused its MFRs on the efficiency and effectiveness of the programs and activities within its control.
- GOCPP reports on criminal justice processes and outcomes that it has a role in or directly supports (i.e., guns and drugs seized, criminal networks disrupted, and cases reviewed through MCIN and SAUSA efforts).
- Where we provide significant funding related to criminal justice processes, GOCPP revised its MFRs to capture that. For example, we removed "reduce the number of homicides and non-fatal shootings" and added "support crime prevention, disruption, and prosecution efforts." Under the latter objective, GOCPP reports on the funding we provide criminal justice agencies for crime prevention programs. We removed "reduce the incarcerated population while reinvesting in programs to reduce recidivism" and added "invest in reentry programs." Under the latter objective, GOCPP reports on funding to support reentry programs, which will reduce recidivism.

- 2. GOCPP should comment on the differences in these reported figures and how information about CICB claims will be tracked in the future. Page 9**

Agency Response: The variance is because the MFR data is using the State fiscal year and the CICB Annual report is using the Federal fiscal year. We can align the CICB Annual report with the MFR report moving forward.

3. **GOCPP should comment on whether it intends to establish a special fund account for the Maryland Entertainment District Security Grant Program Fund in fiscal 2026. Page 13**

Agency Response: GOCPP is working with DBM on this item.

4. **DLS recommends deleting the \$45,878,143 general fund appropriation for the SAPP enhancement funding. Page 22**

Agency Response: GOCPP disagrees. GOCPP supports the Governor's proposed budget. SAPP is a very flexible funding source for local law enforcement. Because it has less restrictive criteria and reporting requirements, SAPP allows local law enforcement agencies, large or small, to put the money to its highest need.

5. **DLS recommends deleting the \$4,000,000 general fund appropriation for the Police Accountability grant funding. Page 22**

Agency Response: GOCPP disagrees. GOCPP supports the Governor's proposed budget. The purpose of the Police Accountability, Community, and Transparency Grant is to enhance the relationship between law enforcement and the community by increasing communication, collaboration, and training. This is an important funding source to improve community/law enforcement relations.

6. **Due to the availability of vacant positions within the agency's Administrative Headquarters, DLS recommends that the agency's general fund allowance be reduced by \$225,341 and that the 3 new regular positions within VSU be deleted. Page 24**

Agency Response: GOCPP strongly disagrees with the recommendation. Last year, GOCPP received 20 new PINs to allow us to get closer to the staff to grant ratio of other states. Because of cost containment, we were only allowed to fill 13 of these positions and we have currently filled 10 with an additional 2 positions in the final stages of hiring. The other 7 positions are on hold until 7/1/25. All these positions are needed to bring our staff to grant ratio up to the needed level.

As described in the DLS analysis, the changes to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (CICB) beginning 7/1/25 will result in an increase in the number of people eligible to receive an award, it removes some of the disqualifying factors, increases the claims amounts, and shortens the time to process the claims from 90 days to 30 days. GOCPP needs additional staff to handle this additional workload.

The DLS analysis recommends deleting the 3 CICB PINs because GOCPP has other vacant positions. GOCPP disagrees with this assertion because all the currently vacant PINs are designated for other purposes.

7 PINs were required to be held for cost containment reasons. These PINs will be filled starting 7/1/25 to get our staff to grant ratio closer to where it should be.

1 PIN was given to GOCPP by DJS to staff the Juvenile Justice commission.

18 PINs are designated for contractual conversion. Staff working full-time are currently in these positions and they will be converted from contractual employees to PIN positions.

1 PIN is for a PROTECT coordinator. This is a legislatively determined position embedded in a police department and serving as a community liaison.

GOCPP currently has no vacant undesignated PIN positions to move to CICB and, therefore, strongly disagrees with this recommendation.

7. GOCPP should comment on whether it plans to include the following MFR measures in its fiscal 2027 submission. Page 26

Agency Response:

- the ratio of grants to monitors;
 - GOCPP's MFRs do and will continue to capture this measure. On page 1 of [GOCPP's MFR Strategic Plan](#) is "ratio of GOCPP sub-awards to monitors." This measure captures the ratio of grant awards (FY24: Sub-awards to monitor 149:1; Goal is 50:1) to monitors.
 - the percentage of grants in risk status audited; the percentage of total grants receiving site visits; and the total number of audits completed.
 - While GOCPP does not oppose including these measures for FY27, the following measures capture higher-level information about the status of grants and GOCPP's oversight of grants:
 - Percent of grants in a regular status
 - Percent of closed GOCPP grants in compliance with grant conditions and regulations
8. GOCPP should comment on its history of insufficient encumbrances of funding obligations, identify the federal funds that were returned in the fiscal 2024 closeout, and discuss the actions that will be taken to prevent this occurring in the fiscal 2025 closeout. Page 27

Agency Response: Historically, GOCPP had not encumbered all obligations during year end close. As a result, those expenditures were paid out in the current year resulting in shortfalls.

The appropriation reverted under federal funds in FY 2024 was primarily for the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) due to the appropriation reflecting a higher amount than the actual federal award. This has been adjusted to align with the current award for Fiscal 2025.

The agency has implemented processes to prevent this in the future, such as,

- Training and awareness for both the financial and grant staff,
- Grant team verifying with Budget before awards are issued,
- Encumbering obligations as they are issued,
- Enhanced communication with GOCPP staff and sub-recipients,
- Monthly reconciliations to monitor spending to appropriation.

- 9. GOCPP should comment on whether it has received any updated guidance on SARU expenditures and the federal VOCA compensation received by the State. Page 30**

Agency Response: SARU expenditures do not qualify for the federal match. Maryland is not eligible for the match because we have a dedicated State funding source for SARU. As per federal guidelines, payments for sexual assault forensic examinations made with appropriated funds are not reimbursable as state compensation payments under the annual Victim Compensation Certification (VCC) form. Gaining eligibility would require Maryland to change the SARU framework. It would require amending sections 11-1007 and 11-1008 of the Criminal Procedure Article and restructuring CICB to receive and process claims for reimbursement of forensic exam and sexual assault care costs.

- 10. To ensure that information about CICB's operations and budgetary concerns are promptly reported to the General Assembly, DLS recommends that \$100,000 in general funds be withheld pending the publication of the CICB Fiscal 2025 Annual Report by November 1, 2025. Page 32**

Agency Response: GOCPP concurs with the recommendation.

- 11. As VOCA funding and expenditures remain of great importance, DLS recommends adding budget language restricting \$250,000 in general funds pending the submission of an annual report about past expenditures and outcomes, as well as the planned fiscal 2026 grants. Page 33**

Agency Response: GOCPP concurs with the recommendation and asks that the report be due on November 1, 2025.