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Office of the State Prosecutor

Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget  
Response to Department of Legislative Services Analysis

House Appropriations Committee  
Public Safety & Administration Subcommittee  
Delegate Gabriel Acevero, Chair  
March 4, 2026

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
Public Safety, Transportation & Environment Subcommittee  
Senator Shelly Hettleman, Chair  
March 6, 2026

The Office of the State Prosecutor (OSP) continues to investigate and where appropriate prosecute political corruption, official misconduct, election law and campaign finance offenses, and other crimes throughout the State of Maryland. The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) Analysis highlights our partnership with the United State's Attorney's Office through a grant from the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCP), the work of our new Unit for Investigating Official Misconduct and Special Victims and our investigations of an increasing number of complaints, both in corruption and election law cases. Our office is committed to engaging in proactive work to encourage compliance as well as enforcement through various methods, including prosecution. The Office concurs in the DLS Recommendation and the Governor's Budget Allowance.

OSP Response to DLS Key Observations Questions:

**DLS Key Observation Question 1. OSP should discuss the timeline for when the funding and contractual position will be reflected in the budget.**

The partnership between the State of Maryland and the United States Attorney's Office is managed through GOCP grant funding. This is not a part of the Office of the State Prosecutor's general budget and would not be supported in the general budget. The Office of the State Prosecutor is the State agency that manages these positions to serve as federal prosecutors at the United States Attorney's Office. These positions, while managed by the Office of the State Prosecutor, are not

tasked by our office and do not advance the Office's mission related to public corruption, police misconduct, and election law violations at the State level.

**DLS Key Observation Question 2. OSP should discuss the reasons there were no charges filed in fiscal 2025 and if these factors are expected to continue impacting the number of charges filed in future fiscal years.**

In fiscal year 2024, the Office of the State Prosecutor created a new unit for Investigating Official Misconduct involving Special Victims and is proud to have had its first successful prosecution stemming from one of this unit's investigations. The purpose of this unit is to conduct investigations, and, where appropriate, prosecutions of allegations of official misconduct that involves special victims. The Office of the State Prosecutor requested the funds to create this unit after a significant uptick in complaints involving special victims and appreciates having the resources to handle these complicated, sensitive allegations with significant expertise. The unit is headed by Mary Setzer, an experienced special victim's prosecutor, who has served as both an Assistant United States Attorney, prosecuting federal cases, and an Assistant State's Attorney in Anne Arundel County State's Attorney's Office.

The unit has been working hard investigating and, where appropriate, prosecuting cases involving special victims. While complaints are steadily increasing for allegations related to sex offenses and special victims, the office would note that prosecuting these cases has unique challenges, especially when the person who is alleged to have committed the crime is in a trusted position. Often victims seek justice outside of the criminal process and this special unit works to create a balanced approach to these cases that ensures the public's protection is considered along with the victim's concerns. Our office often works with administrative agencies to engage in non-prosecution agreements or other mechanisms to achieve justice for the victims without the potential trauma of a larger scale investigation and trial. We anticipate our unit to be able to continue to report high levels of engagement with victims and have strong conviction rates for the trials we choose to prosecute.

Charges are brought in cases where charges are appropriate. We will note in the prior fiscal year this unit successfully tried and convicted a police officer in Talbot County for engaging in inappropriate relationships with teenage girls while on duty. In the current fiscal year, this unit has brought charges against a Cecil County Sheriff's Deputy in a forty-four count indictment related to using his position to inappropriately use law enforcement databases to find information about his wife and other romantic partners as well as threatening these same individuals. In addition, the unit charged and convicted a Cumberland police officer for misusing his position to take advantage of subordinates. This unit has statewide jurisdiction for all SVU cases involving public officials and has only one prosecutor and one investigator—for cases that involve complex investigations and unique challenges. We are proud of the work of this unit and its work with such limited resources.

**DLS Key Observation Question 3. OSP should discuss (1) the expected outlook for complaints in fiscal 2026 and 2027 and (2) expected case processing times in fiscal 2026 and 2027 and efforts to prevent a backlog in open cases.**

The Office of the State Prosecutor believes that complaints will continue to increase as our Office continues to handle complex corruption throughout the State. Not only have our complaints continued to increase, but in FY 2026 our Office had complaints from twenty-two counties in Maryland, meaning that our Office's work is becoming more well-known across the State. We anticipate that as more individuals, law enforcement entities, government agencies and legislative bodies see our Office as a resource the more our complaints will increase. We also are not only engaging on our investigations, in anticipation of the election our Office has also engaged in preventative measures by speaking to the local election boards about how to report crimes or suspicious activity to our Office. We will note that our Office also handles election law violations and those violations increase in the year after an election year because there are six reports rather than one report due in an election year. Every time there is report deadline there are committees that fail to file reports or have audit issues with the reports, which means an increase of complaints the following year.

The Office of the State Prosecutor does a lot with minimal resources. Many of our complex financial crimes, corruption cases, SVU cases, etc. are handled with one attorney and one investigator. We do our best to ensure that cases are pursued efficiently. Our office does not have a backlog of open cases, but does have limited resources. This means that every time we do an investigation and have to seize a phone or computer (which is in most investigations) we have to wait months for that phone to be analyzed by an outside agency. Forensic analysis of electronics takes months as does a lot of auditing functions. We work diligently on those efforts but have to rely on other State agencies to support those efforts. We have taken advantage of remote options for interviews, but many jurisdictions across Maryland have grand juries that meet only once a month or even more rarely, which can also cause a delay in investigations. These are factors that impact timing of resolutions, but are outside the control of our agency.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Charlton Howard*

Charlton T. Howard III  
State Prosecutor