



**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES
FISCAL YEAR 2027 OPERATING BUDGET HEARINGS
RESPONSE TO DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES ANALYSIS**

**SENATE BUDGET & TAXATION COMMITTEE
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE
Senator Cory V. McCray, Chair**

February 5, 2026

**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE
Delegate Emily K. Shetty, Chair
Delegate Dana Jones, Vice Chair**

February 11, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today as you review the proposed operating budget for the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) for fiscal year 2026. We would like to thank our assigned DLS analyst, Mr. Connor Brown, for his thorough analysis.

Agency Response

Page 10, Key Observation 2:

1. In fiscal 2026, MDOD began preparations for implementing Chapter of 1 of 2025 establishing the Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy (ODEAP) and the Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative (MME) which includes policy evaluations and listening sessions for how Maryland can best meet the goals of MME. MDOD should comment on the preliminary findings from fiscal 2026 policy evaluations and listening sessions.

In fiscal 2026, the MDOD convened a multi-agency workgroup—including partners from the Maryland Departments of Aging, Human Services, Labor, Education, Health, Service and Civic Innovation, Veterans and Military Families, Budget and Management, Social and Economic Mobility and the Governor's Office of Children—to implement the ODEAP and the MME initiative.

This collaborative group has been meeting since November and will continue to meet through June to evaluate and develop recommendations. Staff are also receiving ongoing input and feedback through community engagement, and the interagency workgroup will host a disability community listening session in the spring prior to releasing the final recommendations in June 2026.

Page 11, Key Observation 3:

1. Related to SB 22/HB 226 (departmental bills), MDOD should comment on how it would integrate the new housing programs and foundation(s) into its existing programs as well as any potential overlaps, challenges or additional resources needed for implementation. Additionally, MDOD should comment on any potential operational or budgetary impacts of such a program.

SB 22/HB 226 does not create a new housing program within MDOD. Rather, SB 22/HB 226 codifies the MDOD's existing housing work without altering its operations or fiscal requirements. This statutory update is a technical necessity to include the housing program within the scope of a new, independent affiliated foundation. By formally recognizing the housing program in statute alongside the Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy and our assistive technology programs, MDOD ensures the foundation can legally seek private grants and funding for the department's full continuum of programs.

The proposed foundation would operate as an independent, non-governmental entity managed by a volunteer board. While MDOD will provide minimal liaison support using existing resources, the foundation's primary role is to centralize fundraising efforts currently dispersed among staff. By shifting the burden of identifying private funding to the foundation, MDOD personnel will be able to focus on core policy and programmatic duties. Ultimately, this public-private partnership creates a long-term positive fiscal impact by securing supplemental resources without increasing state administrative costs. Any funds the affiliated foundation is able to raise will have a positive operational and/or fiscal impact on the MDOD programs receiving those funds.

Page 12 Operating Budget Recommended Actions:

Concur with the Governor's allowance.

MDOD respectfully supports the recommended action.