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Maryland State Archives [D60A10]  
Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget  
Response to Department of Legislative Services Analysis

House Public Safety and Administration Subcommittee  
Health and Human Services Subcommittee  
The Honorable Gabriel Acevero, Chair  
February 25, 2026

Chair, Members of the Subcommittee:

Good afternoon, I am Elaine Rice Bachmann, Maryland State Archivist, and with me today are Assistant State Archivists Corey Lewis and Emily Oland Squires. Also in attendance is Teresa Fawley, Director of Administration. I want to thank our budget analyst, Elizabeth Waibel, for her thoughtful analysis of our FY27 budget. We have a number of challenging budget issues that remain dynamic as we move through the current fiscal year and into the next, and we appreciate Ms. Waibel's close collaboration in preparing her analysis, as well as her concurrence to the Governor's Allowance.

The Governor's Allowance addresses the Special Funds deficiency created in the Archives budget due to the suspension of the initiative to implement a paywall for certain remote access to [MdLandRec.net](https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/ARCH/SG9-1007(d)_2025.pdf) (MDLR), the Maryland Land Records website developed and maintained by the Archives. We have continued to improve the efficiency of MDLR with our existing staff and resources, and provide an update on the status of the website later in this testimony. Also included here are descriptions of budget challenges related to compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and electronic records, which uniquely burden our agency to a greater extent than any other in state government due to our mandate to preserve and make accessible, in perpetuity, Maryland's permanent records.

We are grateful to the Office of Budget Analysis and OBA analyst Jared Rose, whose proactive recommendations provided increased funding support for rising operational and IT infrastructure costs.

For your reference and further reading our annual report is provided on our website. It includes the Minutes and Agendas of the bi-annual meetings of the Hall of Records Commission, and can be found at:  
[https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/ARCH/SG9-1007\(d\)\\_2025.pdf](https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/ARCH/SG9-1007(d)_2025.pdf)

***Current status of MdLandRec.net***

In November 2025, the Maryland Land Records system released MDLR 5, an update designed to modernize the platform, strengthen security in line with DoIT requirements, and enhance the

overall user experience. This release provided the Archives with an opportunity to implement improvements based on both internal reviews and feedback from users across the state. These and future improvements, currently underway in coordination with the AOC and JIS, reflect our ongoing commitment to maintaining a secure, reliable, and efficient system for all users.

Following the replacement of the processing servers in December of 2024 which enabled the system to handle higher user activity and provide a more equitable access environment, the Archives has stabilized and addressed the issues that caused severe performance issues with the platform earlier that same year. The performance issues experienced in the summer of 2024 were partly due to deferred server replacements, which interrupted the normal lifecycle of essential infrastructure.

At present, our storage servers, as opposed to our processing servers previously mentioned, are six years old and require replacement. However, due to funding constraints affecting the broader IT infrastructure, full server replacement has been forced to be deferred until FY28. In the interim, we are extending maintenance and support contracts to ensure continuity of operations and to mitigate risk.

Archives' leadership is currently working collaboratively with the Public Safety, Transportation and Environment work group subcommittee of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee on solutions to deficiencies related to funding for Maryland Land Records. This work group is actively meeting to receive reports from the Department of Budget and Management, the Archives, the Judiciary Administrative Office of the Courts, and public stakeholders regarding sustainable paths forward.

In addition, we have expressed concerns about proposed legislation that would remove the State Archivist's authority to directly set reasonable fees for services [HB576 (Delegate Griffith)/SB425 (Senator JB Jennings)]. The passage of this bill will reduce the State Archivist's ability to supplement the GF contribution and ensure that the Archives legal mandates can be fulfilled. No funds have been included in our agency's budget in anticipation of this legislation. **Please note, we were not contacted by the sponsors prior to the bill filing.** The leadership team of the Archives did discuss a potential amendment with Delegate Griffith to HB576, which was intended to allow the State Archivist to maintain the authority to set existing fees but would require the regulatory process for any new fees (which would include Maryland Land Records and Plats system), and we understand that he has forwarded that concept on to bill drafting. However, we are unsure how this legislation might impact findings of the Public Safety, Transportation and Environment work group, if enacted.

### ***Title II ADA Accessibility Compliance***

This federal law establishes technical standards to ensure digital content is accessible to individuals with disabilities, with compliance deadlines beginning in April 2026. You may be hearing from many agencies struggling to meet this compliance, and would offer that the Archives faces a more extraordinary challenge to comply than our peers.

We manage 64 public-facing websites that must comply with ADA Title II Web Content Accessibility Guidelines requirements. While high-traffic sites have been prioritized and several sites can be classified as archived content, reducing the overall remediation workload several

active sites remain particularly challenging due to their size, complexity, and dynamic content. We enter critical testing next week for the remediation efforts completed to date.

MDLandRec.net presents the most significant challenge. The system receives and processes more than 500,000 land record images each month, and each image requires accessibility remediation through a hybrid automated and manual approach. Although we have identified the tools necessary to efficiently manage this remediation at scale, the lack of sufficient funding to procure and implement these solutions has limited progress.

As a result, the Archives is working with the Office of the Attorney General to determine whether we qualify for an “undue burden” determination under ADA guidelines. Such a classification would not absolve MSA of its accessibility responsibilities. Rather, compliance would be met through an on-demand request process. Given the volume of records involved, and the thousands of users engaged with MSA websites on a daily basis, this approach could result in extended turnaround times for fulfilling accessibility requests.

### ***Ongoing and Future Electronic Records Management***

The Maryland State Archives has a statutory obligation to preserve government records of permanent value and ensure their accessibility to the public. As government operations have transitioned from paper-based systems to digital platforms, the volume and complexity of electronic records have increased dramatically. The challenges this shift brings with it are monumental, as the agency is responsible for not only securely storing the one copy of the electronic file, but also responsible for ensuring the hardware, software, and multiple backup versions of that one copy are accessible in perpetuity.

To meet its mandate, the Archives must prepare for the secure transfer, preservation, and public access of born-digital records in accordance with laws and archival standards. Clear, consistent statewide guidance is essential to help agencies properly create, manage, retain, and transfer electronic records while mitigating risks such as data loss, noncompliance, and security vulnerabilities.

The Archives has recently updated its electronic records guidance and established standards for metadata, file formats, retention scheduling, system documentation, and secure transfer protocols. By promoting uniform practices across state and local government, the program strengthens compliance, reduces duplication of effort, and prevents costly remediation.

Sustained investment in the Archives’ electronic records program is critical to the archival infrastructure. Effective digital preservation requires specialized expertise, secure storage environments, and ongoing technological oversight to ensure that Maryland’s digital government records remain authentic, accessible, and usable over time.

With that I would be happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully submitted and for more information:

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