



Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

HOUSE EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

CHAIRPERSON, DELEGATE STEPHANIE SMITH

February 11, 2026

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SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

SENATE EDUCATION, BUSINESS & ADMINISTRATION

SUBCOMMITTEE

CHAIRPERSON, SENATOR NANCY KING

February 23, 2026



Class of 2025

The Maryland School for the Deaf provides an inclusive, language-rich environment for deaf and hard-of-hearing students from birth through age 21. Rooted in a bilingual education approach, we ensure full access to American Sign Language (ASL) and English across comprehensive academic, extracurricular, and student life programs. In partnership with families and communities, we empower students to think critically and develop a sense of self and belonging.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD) provides educational and developmental services for the State's deaf and hard-of-hearing children and youth. MSD, founded in 1867, serves this population through its two campuses located in Frederick and Columbia.

MSD is an independent State agency governed by its 19-member Board of Trustees, which is appointed by the Governor and approved by the Senate. Approximately 86% of MSD's operating budget is provided from State general funds, while the remaining 14% is provided through federal grants, various special funds (e.g., employee food sales, out-of-state tuition, and county participation fees), and reimbursable funds (Enhanced Program of Services) from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Students who are residents of Maryland attend MSD at no cost. Students from outside Maryland may be admitted on a tuition basis.

MSD utilizes the Maryland State Curriculum and the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards, offering its graduating high school seniors the Maryland State High School diploma. In 2018, MSD went through the accreditation process for the Middle States Association - Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CESS) and received a recommendation for full accreditation through May 2027.

MSD's instructional programs operate on a 180-day school year, from the end of August through mid-June. Extended School Year (ESY) programs and enrichment camps are offered at MSD during the summer months. Approximately 21% of the Frederick Campus students and 25% of the Columbia Campus students reside on campus during the week, returning to their homes on weekends and during school breaks.

MSD's Frederick Campus provides a comprehensive elementary/secondary school program, with separate departments for Elementary (Pre-kindergarten through Grade 5), Middle (Grades 6-8), and High School (Grades 9-12). The Frederick Campus also offers a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, which provides students with career skills, including computer and technical courses. In addition to providing instruction to deaf and hard-of-hearing students, the campus provides additional support and services for students with additional learning and behavioral disabilities. Since 2023, MSD has successfully implemented the Oriole's Career Academy (OCA) for students aged 18-21 who have not received a high school diploma, but can benefit from additional life skills training, employment training, problem-solving skills, and self-advocacy skills.

The Columbia Campus provides a comprehensive elementary/secondary school program for elementary and middle school age students. In addition to providing instruction to deaf and hard-of-hearing students, the campus provides additional support and services for students with additional learning and behavioral disabilities. MSD's Family Education

and Early Childhood Department (FEECD) works with families of deaf and hard-of-hearing infants and toddlers to develop early language skills for their children. The optimum time for language development is from birth to age three; therefore, children that are given early communication training have a much greater opportunity for social and academic development in later years. MSD's FEECD teachers work with approximately 74 children and their families throughout Maryland, through in-home and group sessions, to help ensure that these children will be prepared to learn at grade-level when they enter school.

The Enhanced Services serves deaf students with other moderate to severe disabilities. Generally, students in this program require educational and developmental services of a more extensive and individualized nature. There are currently 55 students receiving enhanced services in the current school year.

Student enrollment (representing 22 of 23 counties, and Baltimore City) has reached 492 students in the current school year.

THE SCHOOL'S MISSION

The Maryland School for the Deaf provides an inclusive, language-rich environment for deaf and hard-of-hearing students from birth through age 21. Rooted in a bilingual education approach, we ensure full access to American Sign Language (ASL) and English across comprehensive academic, extracurricular, and student life programs. In partnership with families and communities, we empower students to think critically and develop a sense of self and belonging.

MSD Core Values

- **Accountability** - We take responsibility for our actions, decisions, and commitments, holding ourselves and each other to high standards. By fostering a culture of trust, integrity, and ownership, we ensure that students, staff, and families work together to support growth, learning, and success.
- **Belonging** - We cultivate a welcoming and inclusive community where every student, staff member, and family feels valued and supported. By embracing our unique identities and building connections with empathy, we create an environment where everyone has a place and is celebrated.
- **Excellence** - We strive for continuous improvement in all that we do, setting high standards for learning, leadership, and personal growth.
- **Purpose** - We act with intent, making decisions that align with our mission and create meaningful impact. We encourage students and staff to discover and pursue their own purpose, fostering growth, fulfillment, and direction.
- **Resilience** - We embrace challenges with perseverance, determination, and a growth mindset, learning from experience and pushing forward with confidence.

I. Students achieve their developmental potential.

The Maryland School for the Deaf provides a high level of experience, expertise, and dedication in the education and personal development of deaf and hard-of-hearing children and youth. In alignment with MSD's mission, MSD continues to develop and implement programs and services that meet the diverse needs of all deaf and hard-of-hearing students across Maryland. In addition to academic instruction and support, MSD provides additional support for students receiving Enhanced Services for deaf students with additional moderate to severe disabilities in partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education. MSD also provides a range of related services to support student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) needs such as speech and language services. At the high school level, the Work-to-Learn program supports eligible students in developing their career readiness skills. Through a partnership between MSD and the MSDE Division of Rehabilitation Services, participating MSD students receive training, support, and supervised work experience.

With its convenient, centrally located two-campus configuration, MSD is well-positioned to pursue and achieve this goal by providing deaf students and their families with the best of both worlds - a progressive, enriching, state-of-the-art program dedicated to and focused on their special educational and developmental needs, and the proximity to allow most students to live at home and participate as members of their local community.

MSD offers two curriculum pathways to meet the diverse needs of our students. The first pathway follows the Maryland State Curriculum and the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (MCCRS). Students who meet applicable graduation requirements through this pathway are eligible to earn the Maryland State High School Diploma.

The second pathway is a Life-Based Education Curriculum designed for students whose educational needs are best addressed through alternative instructional outcomes. Students in this pathway may earn a Maryland State Certificate of Program Completion, as determined by their IEP team. Students receiving Enhanced Services may participate in either pathway based on individual needs and goals. Students with significant developmental disabilities receive services aligned to their IEPs.

II. Establish and strengthen communication and support for families and their children in the Family Education and Early Childhood Department.

The Family Education and Early Childhood Department (FEECD) serves deaf and hard-of-hearing students from birth until their fifth birthday. Family educators who have skills necessary to deal effectively with the linguistic, social-emotional, and academic needs of this population provide services to parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing infants and

toddlers. Emphasis is placed on establishing communication between children and their families using a bilingual approach. This means that the languages of instruction are American Sign Language (ASL) and English. Concepts and language are taught as early as possible since the prime time for language acquisition is between birth and three years of age. Children and their families are encouraged to consider the use of amplification as appropriate as well as speech therapy in order to develop all communication opportunities for the child.

In addition to providing individual home visits on a regular basis throughout the State, the department also sponsors regional parent meetings. In order to facilitate communication between parent and child, ASL instruction is offered during home visits, virtually, and on campus at no cost to the parent during the school year. FEECD offers weekly parent meetings at both the Frederick and Columbia campuses during the school year. While the parent meetings occur, the youngest children (birth to 24 months) may participate in infant/toddler playgroups with FEECD staff. Two-year-old and three-year-old classes are offered at both campuses throughout the week. Speech teachers work with children in individual and group sessions as appropriate for the child's age and developmental level.

The three-year-old classes consist of full day programming for children with the Individualized Education Program (IEP) at MSD. The students are immersed in language rich environments to ensure important gains in language acquisition are achieved. The program expansion allows for deeper daily instruction to provide these young learners with solid school readiness skills in the areas of language, literacy, mathematical thinking, early science, and social studies. These young learners will enter Pre-kindergarten and then Kindergarten ready for the rigors of the College and Career Ready Standards.

Family engagement is a key factor in student achievement. The full day program for three-year-old students includes many opportunities for families to engage and support their child's early learning via parent support meetings, home visits, conferences with teachers, and daily communication.

III. Provide quality educational and developmental services.

MSD has adopted and implemented curriculums across multiple content areas, including literacy and mathematics, that incorporates State standards and evidence-based instructional supports to meet the educational needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Recognizing the evolving demands of the modern world, MSD ensures its curriculum prepares students for future academic and career success.

To support this goal, the curriculum at MSD integrates innovative computer technology and media equipment and places an increased emphasis on Career and Technical Education (CTE). This focus is supported through the renovation of MSD's Veditz building,

which houses the CTE program. Through these programs, students develop essential technology literacy and workforce-ready skills that are highly valued in today's job market.

MSD utilizes laptop computers, iPads, and Chromebooks to provide students and staff with access to high-quality instructional technology that enhances teaching and learning across content areas.

MSD offers a tuition reimbursement program to assist teachers and staff in obtaining and maintaining their educational requirements for certification and to obtain highly qualified teachers. This program is being utilized to provide education to staff to fill administrative positions for forecasted vacancies and to maintain highly qualified teaching faculty at MSD.

MSD is licensed by the Department of Human Services for residential services. The license requires that all student life staff receive training in CPR/First Aid, blood-borne pathogens, child development, identifying and reporting child neglect and abuse, and other courses for a total of 40 hours each year. MSD will continue to provide training to staff to enable a safe and nurturing environment for its students. All residential staff must be certified by the Maryland Department of Health (COMAR 14.31.07.04). Residential Child and Youth Care Practitioners (RCYCP) must take a training program and pass an examination to obtain initial certification. They are then required to complete 20 Continuing Education Units every two years to renew their certification.

MSD's Facilities Master Plan identifies capital projects needed to provide MSD's future students with state-of-the-art program facilities. The Frederick Campus Veditz Building Renovation project is nearing the end of the construction phase of the project. The project provides an updated, state-of-the-art Career and Technical Education (CTE) program at MSD. The construction stage of the Emergency Mass Notification System for the Columbia Campus is also nearing completion and testing of the system has begun. This Emergency Mass Notification System will provide life safety improvements to the MSD Columbia Campus. The Frederick Campus New Student Residences project has completed the schematic design phase and is entering the design development phase of the project. The project is also currently in the process of procuring the services of a construction manager at risk (CMAR). This project will provide updated Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant dormitories, a health center, and a student center.

Enrollment

Factors impacting enrollment vary from year to year. Pursuant to statute, the MSD Board of Trustees establishes admission criteria and guidelines for admitting new students. MSD has a designated admissions office responsible for maintaining admissions guidelines that include engaging prospective families and students through campus visits, responding to inquiries regarding admission, and processing admission paperwork throughout the school year.

Reasons for enrollment at MSD vary among families. MSD has enrolled students whose families relocated from other states specifically to access programming at MSD, as well as students residing in Maryland transferring from other local public schools to participate in a full signing educational environment at MSD. While it is difficult to identify specific factors influencing enrollment trends annually, available indicators suggest enrollment remains strong due to MSD's outreach efforts and partnership with early intervention programs across surrounding school systems.

For the 2024-2025 school year, MSD admitted 79 new students, including students transitioning from early intervention services and family education programs to IEP-eligible preschool students and those receiving enhanced services.

For the current 2025-2026 school year, MSD has admitted 56 students to-date and is actively processing additional admission inquiries and scheduling upcoming campus tours for prospective students, which indicates continued enrollment viability. As of January 30th, MSD has a total enrollment of 492 students, including early intervention students and students receiving enhanced services, representing the highest enrollment since pre-pandemic years.

Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)

At the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year, MSD Kindergarten from both campuses did not take the regular KRA assessment during the testing window established for public schools due to required accommodations and instead completed the paper version. As a result, scores were entered using different methods, which led to technical challenges and data entry errors when submitting the overall Kindergarten results. At the time of this response, only the Frederick Campus results are available; MSD is still awaiting results for our Columbia Campus Kindergarten students.

At the Frederick Campus, all enrolled Kindergarten students participated in the assessment.

For the Star Math:

- 93% scored at the Established Skills level.
- 7% scored at the Beginning Skills level.

For the Star Early Literacy:

- 86.7% scored at the Established Skills level.
- 6.7% scored at the Developing Skills level.
- 6.7% scored at the Beginning Skills level.

Use of Results to Inform Instruction and Support:

While the KRA is primarily used to assess incoming Kindergarten readiness and guide instruction during the Kindergarten year, MSD will also use these results to evaluate the effectiveness of MSD's robust birth-5 programs. The data will serve as a "report card" for early intervention efforts, helping identify strengths, areas for improvement, and potential needs for instructional revisions and professional development.

For current Kindergarten students, the KRA establishes a baseline of skills, allowing MSD teachers to identify strengths and gaps early. Teachers will use the results to target specific skill deficits, implement differentiated grouping, and provide early intervention support as needed to ensure gaps are addressed promptly and students receive appropriate instruction and resources.

Legislative Audit

MSD continues to work diligently to correct all Office of Legislative Audit findings.

The revised Memorandum of Agreement with the MSD Foundation has been completed. In partnership with the Department of Budget and Management's Audit and Finance Compliance Unit, MSD is working with the Foundation to ensure that the missing reports are received.

MSD has revamped its solicitation process to reflect and abide by COMAR and the State of Maryland Procurement Manual, including implementation of a process to use the exact version of the Board of Public Works checklist to complete all procurements in categories I, II, and III.

The solicitation for the sign language interpreting services has been bid and is currently under review. The next step will be to present the solicitation and supporting documentation to the Board of Public Works. MSD has worked closely with the Office of State Procurement, Department of Budget and Management, and the Office of the Attorney General on the development of the contract. MSD is also continuing work on the

retroactive procurement that will cover the provision of these services between January 2023 and March 2026. This process is approximately 85% complete.

Deficiency Appropriation for FY 2026

The FY 2027 Proposed Operating Budget includes a deficiency appropriation for MSD in FY 2026 of approximately \$1.9 million. This deficiency appropriation will restore funding that was previously reduced due to Statewide reductions in the FY 2026 Operating Budget. The restored funding will be used to support salary and fringe shortfalls. It is difficult for MSD to hold open positions, given that we are mandated by federal law to provide a Free and Appropriate Education to deaf and hard-of-hearing students in Maryland and a majority of our positions are for classroom teachers, teacher aides, and other staff that provide direct services to students.

Ely Academic Building - Chiller Replacement

The Maryland School for the Deaf is using general funds to cover the costs of a rental chiller for the air conditioning in the Ely Academic Building. These costs have been \$115,377 to-date in FY 2026. The Department of General Services is managing the installation of a replacement chiller. The work to install the new chiller began in December and is expected to be completed in March.

Recommended Actions

MSD concurs with the Governor's allowance.