

**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES
AGENCY RESPONSE TO
DLS RECOMMENDATIONS
FISCAL YEAR 2017 OPERATING BUDGET HEARINGS**

**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUB-COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

February 10, 2015

**SENATE BUDGET & TAXATION COMMITTEE
SUB-COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

February 11, 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today as you review the proposed budget for the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) for FY 2017. We would like to thank our assigned DLS analyst, Mr. Jared Sussman, for his thorough analysis and are pleased that he has concluded that we have proposed a responsible spending plan for the coming year.

In addition to our testimony, MDOD has provided information summarizing key policy areas and programs that are the focus of the Department's work on behalf of people with disabilities. It is our hope that this will be helpful to you and your staff, should you receive constituent calls related to PROMISE or other disability issues.

Recommended Actions

1. Concur with the Governor's Allowance.

We respectfully support this recommended action.

Discussion

1. The Secretary should comment on when an updated State Disabilities Plan will be published.

Response

The Department of Disabilities is currently working on a new State Disabilities Plan (2016-2019) with an anticipated publish date by April 30, 2016. The Plan provides for the coordination of the State's services which ensure compliance with state and federal civil rights laws especially as it relates to community-based personal care, housing, transportation, employment, health care, accessible technology, education, and family supports to Marylanders with disabilities. The State Disabilities Plan provides a framework for delivering, monitoring, and striving for improvement in these services. Progress is measured annually.

Preparation for the new plan began in the fall of 2015 when the current plan was reviewed by the Department's Policy Directors along with their state agency partners. At the same time, new Mission and Vision statements were created by departmental staff. We also identified four focus areas which will guide the development of goals for the next three years. Our focus areas broadly address ensuring choices for those with disabilities, addressing financial well-being for those with disabilities and their families, responsible use of resources, and ensuring accessible and effective communication across state agencies and among stakeholders.

During the timeframe of January-March, 2016 we are collecting feedback from our constituents across the state of Maryland. Departmental staff are meeting with representatives from advocacy groups to discuss the State Disabilities Plan, generating opportunities for input. In addition, we have created a survey which we are distributing through our contacts, through social media, and through our website.

We will be compiling the feedback which will inform the development of goals under the four focus areas. Finally, the Department's Policy Directors are meeting with state agency partner representatives to review their agency plans and coordinate efforts.

The Interagency Disabilities Board (IADB) and the Maryland Commission on Disabilities provide feedback as we create goals and strategies. The IADB will give final approval to the plan published in April, 2016.

2. The Secretary should comment on why there has been a decrease in both loan applications and approval in recent years for the Assistive Technology Loan Program.

Response

The decline in the number of applications processed in FY2014 compared to FY2015 (from 120 to 95) was due to both a general decline in applications and to staff turnover. The loan program

operates with two staff. One staff member retired at the end of calendar year 2013, and was not replaced until October 2014. This meant there was only one staff person to market the program and process applications.

We believe the decline in the number of loans approved (80 in FY2014 versus 43 in FY2015) and issued (61 in FY2014 versus 24 in FY2015) was partially a function of fewer applications being processed. In addition, the Assistive Technology Loan Program (ATLP) Board of Directors, which approves the loans, became more stringent in its approval process.

Finally, there is the potential that the ATLP's traditional marketing strategies are not as effective as they have been in the past. The program will look at developing new outreach strategies over the remainder of FY16 to increase applications, especially for vehicle modification loans which represents the highest area of need for our target population.

3. The Secretary should update the committees on the current status of the PROMISE and what is expected for FY 2017.

Response

As the analyst mentioned, FY 17 is the fourth State fiscal year of MDOD's implementation of the PROMISE Grant. The program's purpose is to increase successful employment and educational outcomes for youth receiving SSI by providing the following key intensive interventions:

- Community-based case management;
- Benefits counseling and financial literacy services;
- Career and work-based learning experiences; and
- Family training and information.

Thus far, program implementation has been successful and Maryland's performance ranks at or near the top compared with other state grantees. The following is a list of Key Performance Measures linked to the interventions listed above. We have included our current numbers as well as our goals for FY17 and at the end of the 5 year program.

Number of family plans completed

Current: 69 % **FY17 Goal:** 75 % **Overall Goal at end of 5 years:** 90%

Number of youth with unpaid work experience

Current: 36% **FY 17 Goal:** 40% **Overall Goal at end of 5 years:** 80 %

Number of youth with a paid work experience

Current: 23 % **FY17 Goal:** 20% **Overall Goal at end of 5 years:** 100 %

Enrolled youth remain in school at a rate 50% higher than Maryland state rate

Year 1: 94% remained in school (still collecting year 2 data)

Linkage to Post-Secondary Education

Current: 28 % (this exceeds the goal of 25% at end of grant Year 5)

We do not expect any major changes to the program or our implementation strategy in FY17. It will mark the second year that the program will provide a summer youth employment component which allows participants who have completed other required interventions to receive a paid summer employment experience. In October, the program received a supplemental award of \$1,700,000 as the analysis mentions. These funds will be utilized to enhance services around two major functions to start in March of FY16 and continuing until the program ends. The majority of the supplemental award will be used to provide more intensive case management services to the hardest to reach program applicants to ensure that they and their families remain engaged and complete the required interventions. The remainder will be used to provide increased access to individual financial coaching and education. During the initial phase of program implementation there has been a higher than anticipated demand for these services and the original budget was only for group trainings and referrals to financial coaching. Additionally, youth participating in summer youth employment and their families will need to file taxes. This funding will allow us to connect eligible PROMISE participants to free tax preparation.

4. MDOD should comment on what its role could be in the ABLÉ program.

Response

The legislation creates a position for the Secretary of Disabilities to participate on the College Savings/Maryland 529 Board. MDOD will also provide consultation support to College Savings/Maryland 529 as it develops the ABLÉ Program. We anticipate using our existing staff and resources to carry out these duties. The Department also expects to assist the College Savings/Maryland 529 staff with program outreach and marketing to people with disabilities throughout the state. While it is difficult to estimate at this time, we are certain a more specific role for MDOD will develop if the legislation passes. Should the legislation pass, we look forward to assisting the College Savings/Maryland 529 Board and staff to develop and implement a successful program.