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BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS
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PRESENT

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Treasurer

HONORABLE PETER FRANCHOT

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PROCEEDINGS

GOVERNOR HOGAN: It's September 1st already. I know we're all pleased to see our students returning to in-person instruction in every school system across the State. Unfortunately, this week schools all over Baltimore City, including 31 just yesterday, had to dismiss students early due to the lack of proper air conditioning.

It's unbelievable to me that this is still happening, after the Comptroller and I have worked together for the last six years to push to get every school air conditioned and to provide record funding for every school to be air conditioned and our non-stop efforts to hold schools accountable. We were successful in requiring Baltimore City to reluctantly create a plan to finally bring air conditioning to all their schools, even against fierce opposition from legislative leaders. But in spite of them putting plans together, the work was not actually completed.

We established a Healthy School Facilities Fund to provide additional State funded grants to public schools specifically to make urgently needed emergency air conditioning and heating upgrades. Baltimore City returned the money to the State after failing to spend it on the improvements.

Our administration has provided seven years of record funding to our schools, all of our schools across the State, and even more to Baltimore City

schools. Among the hundred largest school systems in America, Baltimore is the third highest funded school system, which makes it even more inexcusable.

Earlier this year, we enacted a historic school construction plan with record funding to make sure that all school buildings across the entire State were modern, safe, efficient, and air conditioned. Protecting students from the sweltering heat is critically important and City leaders have continued to fail in this regard.

But the problem goes far beyond that, now because of COVID-19. Our public health experts have repeatedly stressed that proper ventilation is a critical tool to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. The CDC specifically recommended maximizing building ventilation and improving the level of air filtration as much as possible through the use of high efficiency HEPA filtration units. And we have provided more than \$3 billion in additional federal dollars in relief funding to the school systems in Maryland specifically for pandemic related costs, including improvements to HVAC and ventilation and filtration systems for safer school buildings for our kids. And yet, even with those billions of dollars to address these issues, and with the school year already underway, City schools are still un-air-conditioned, and it's unclear even which schools or school systems have properly utilized all these billions in funding.

After months of requesting this information, we are no longer asking. So today, I am directing the State Superintendent of Schools and the

Interagency Commission on School Construction to immediately provide us a report on ventilation and air filtration systems district by district and school by school. And we will be holding school systems accountable for these financial resources and the way that they have been utilized to ensure that safe and healthy environments are in our school buildings for all of our kids.

With that, we'll move on to a friendlier, happier topic. From the very beginning of this pandemic, I have repeatedly reminded Marylanders that we're all in this together. And getting through this together has required just an incredibly, a massive effort, which involved thousands of dedicated public servants working tirelessly day in and day out to keep Maryland safe. From standing up and staffing testing sites, and then vaccination clinics, and building hospital surge tents, to coordinating with local leaders on State guidance, procuring and distributing PPE and distributing meals to schoolchildren, these State employees have delivered the highest level of customer service under the most difficult of circumstances. And today, we're honored to be joined by some of these incredible men and women, some of whom are here with us in person and others who are joining us virtually. And I just want to say that on behalf of all the people of a proud and grateful State, I want to thank each and every one of them for their dedicated service to the people in Maryland. And we're going to be presenting each of them with a Governor's Citation. I think some of them are going to be marching in here right now.

Although they just missed all the nice things I said about them, because they were out in the hallway. But let's give them all a big round of applause for their incredible --

(Applause.)

GOVERNOR HOGAN: We've got to make sure we get everybody in here.

Thank you all so much for all of your dedicated hard work.

Thank you very much. I think everybody showed up in person instead of virtual.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: As you are leaving, I'm going to give you one of my, each of you one of my much coveted Comptroller medallions --

(Laughter.)

TREASURER KOPP: Can I just point out, I think that we have folks here from agencies across the State with different specific functions but (indiscernible) service, customer service. That's not typical --

GOVERNOR HOGAN: We're proud of all the hard work everybody does all the time in their jobs --

TREASURER KOPP: Yeah.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: -- but particularly the way that you all stepped up during COVID. We can't thank you enough.

TREASURER KOPP: Now known as an all of government --

GOVERNOR HOGAN: -- and smile through your masks. Thank you all so much.

(Applause.)

(Photographs are taken.)

GOVERNOR HOGAN: With that, I'm going to turn it over to my colleagues for any opening remarks. Madam Treasurer?

TREASURER KOPP: Governor, first of all, it's good to be here. And I really meant what I said about an all of government response. I just was meeting with some other State treasurers from other states around the nation and people react differently. There are a lot of people who are still in their silos, even regarding something as important this. So this is great recognition.

Let me only say that I think it's perfectly appropriate to ask for a statewide accounting of where we are on the expenditure on modernization of schools. I take some pride and I think you should too, Governor, and the Comptroller, that since you all signed off on a plan in 2017, almost all of the schools in Baltimore County and about 55 out of the 76 schools in Baltimore City now have

appropriate air conditioning and heating. There still are some to go, but of course the five years isn't over yet either and it's good to have an accounting.

We use different language perhaps, and the different attitudes, since I think the Baltimore City schools are schools of great promise. But we'll see what the facts actually are.

I don't want to step on the Comptroller's toes but the Comptroller and I had a very interesting experience last week that you would be interested in, and I think everybody would, at the Huntsville Armory in Baltimore County, which is interesting not only because that great historic area is so significant to the Pikesville area and it's ripe for the appropriate historic preservation and development, but as a result of your having created a group, a commission, to look at the Armory and the site and to try to create a vision for the next stage, and then moved on from that group to the present foundation, which is prepared to carry it on.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Great.

TREASURER KOPP: And things are really moving quite smoothly.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Yeah, well thank you for mentioning --

TREASURER KOPP: I was very impressed. So that's what I did last week.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: That's good. Thank you for that. Mr. Comptroller?

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Thank you, Governor and Madam Treasurer. As thousands of students, teachers, and staff begin the 2021-2022 schoolyear, I want to extend my best wishes for a safe and productive and successful year. Like so many Marylanders, Governor, I remain however very concerned about the rise in COVID cases, especially with the Delta variant. And we're just not sure how this is going to impact the upcoming school year. I have expressed these concerns in a letter I sent to our new State Superintendent of Schools. I eagerly await his response. More specifically, I'd like to know what are the contingency plans that MSDE has and our local school systems have put in place. In the event that we see COVID infections in schools, which quite frankly I think is plain as the noses on our faces, there are going to be repercussions from this particular variant. We're certainly seeing it down south. I hope it doesn't happen. But I hope we're also practically planning in a pragmatic way since we have a high number of students, teachers and staff who remain unvaccinated. While I'm encouraged, Governor, that Maryland is one of the most vaccinated states in the nation, frankly under your leadership and advocacy, it only takes one person to start an outbreak of this particularly communicable variant. That's why in addition to a universal mask mandate, I believe we need a vaccination requirement to be put

into place for teachers and staff. And when they are available, obviously based on the FDA, we need vaccination requirements for students.

This isn't a novel idea. Other states have imposed these types of requirements because quite frankly we cannot take enough precautions to ensure the health and welfare of our students and make sure that teachers and staff aren't risking their lives to do the jobs that we ask them to do and that they love.

I saw a WYPR article printed yesterday that the Superintendent made a very strong declarative statement, no school closings this year because of COVID, and I hope he's right. I hope this prediction was guided by the contingency and safety plans that MSDE and local school systems have put in place and I hope to learn more about these contingency plans in his response to my letter from last week.

Speaking of school closures, I just want to join Governor Hogan on this issue of climate control in schools. I was unbelievably disheartened to learn that over 20 schools yesterday in the City of Baltimore had to once again close because these school buildings still don't have air conditioning. I mean, years and years of discussion of this at the Board of Public Works, where I literally brought in a split unit and put it in front of us and showed people that it could be put into the existing electric socket and it would cool any classroom. For the local system to spend years looking at that and dragging their feet, for an affordable,

technologically proper, appropriate, something that the local electrical union was willing to volunteer some of their services to put them in. They are not window units, these are split units. And I find it to be just completely unacceptable that we have a continuing situation not only in Baltimore City but also in Baltimore County in some of our schools there.

So it's like Groundhog Day. Every single first day of school over the past several years there have been school closures or early dismissals because they do not have air conditioning. And the reason they don't have air conditioning is because the school officials say we're going to wait and we're going to, you know, either build a new school or do a complete renovation. But this emergency situation continues to exist. The fact that it is still happening in the wealthiest state in the wealthiest nation in the history of the world, especially with, I mean, the Governor is managing a tsunami of federal dollars coming in. It is not a money issue. It is not a technical issue. It is not a, oh gee, the county is, you know, just really think there is another alternative. No. This is something deeper, I'm sorry to report. And it's local, political hubris standing in the way of what we need to do for our kids.

Governor, I salute you for being an advocate for this and especially now with the new COVID cases on the rise, the absence of HVAC units that should have been put in years ago and proper air circulation constitutes a serious public

health issue and remains a socioeconomic injustice. It's my hope that we can stimulate action on this. It should happen yesterday. No student in Maryland should be forced to learn in sweltering, unhealthy, and unsafe conditions. And Groundhog Day, I mean, when we get winter, winter is going to come, we're going to have the same schools, teachers in parkas, kids all zipped up in scarves inside the school classroom because they are not heated. These split units do both.

No student should have to sit there in an un-air-conditioned or unheated classroom. And the issue is not money. The issue is political will. And Governor, thank you for your comments. I support them. I understand where the Treasurer is coming from. I'm not trying to be adversarial with her, because she generally wants this to happen. But you know --

TREASURER KOPP: I think, Comptroller, that when we all can look at the facts, including the fact that over 50 schools have been air conditioned according to the plans, and in fact it is expensive to redo wiring. I really appreciate the volunteers, but the wiring in those schools did not support the changes. Let's look at the facts and have the facts available to everybody and I think the story will be clear.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Okay well --

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Thank you --

GOVERNOR HOGAN: -- the facts are, yesterday we had 31 schools close because they didn't have air conditioners --

TREASURER KOPP: Yes, that's right.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: -- we've been pushing and funding it for seven years now.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: I couldn't agree more.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Let's get started with the Secretary's Agenda.

SECRETARY GONTRUM: Good morning, Governor, Madam Treasurer, Mr. Comptroller. There are 14 items on the Secretary's Agenda and 13 reports of emergency procurements. Item A13 is being withdrawn at the request of the department. I'm happy to assist with answering any questions.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Questions on the Secretary's Agenda?

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: I have one, but I'll defer to Madam Treasurer.

TREASURER KOPP: No.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: So Item A1, if someone could help me understand what --

SECRETARY GONTRUM: Item --

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: -- rather odd name but I'm sure it means something --

GOVERNOR HOGAN: I asked my staff the same question yesterday. I should know what Splunk means, but I didn't know.

SECRETARY GONTRUM: Item A1 is an emergency report from the Department of Information Technology. We have Secretary Leahy --

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Secretary Leahy can explain Splunk to us.

MR. LEAHY: Absolutely. Good morning, Governor, Madam Treasurer, Mr. Comptroller. I'm Michael Leahy, Secretary for the Department of Information Technology.

Splunk is a software system that allows us to integrate various cybersecurity (indiscernible) analytics and keep track of what bits and bytes travel across our network.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Okay.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Well, I understand this contract has come about because a former vendor simply walked away from the contract in March, apparently with the explanation that they had a better work opportunity than what they agreed to do for us. So what exactly, is that the right thing? Or I find it a little bit hard, I find that a little incomprehensible.

MR. LEAHY: I do too, Mr. Comptroller. It's very disappointing. Unfortunately, that individual chose to take what they saw as the better career opportunity for them. The vendor that was responsible for providing that person and that type of personnel was unable in a timely way to find someone with that skill set. At that time we came forward and asked for a nine-month extension simply because they were unable to find those people and we had to make certain the systems continued to run (indiscernible). It has come back at this point as an emergency contract because as we discussed at the last meeting, I wanted to make sure all emergency contracts were brought to the Board as soon as I became aware of them. This was not COVID related, but I was told, when I saw this on the Agenda, that our staff had worked with the Board of Public Works staff to make sure this was in the proper format given the circumstances because of this individual leaving and the nine months that have intervened. They have found both of these skills, and in fact because of our organization being an internal, what's called a SOC, security operations center, for the State, which is operating 24/7/365, these vendors in the past have provided these services basically eight to six, five days a week. So we are bringing in our own people to do this work on staff for the SOC and we can get the skills through this contract to require the Splunk licenses to still be available for the SOC operation.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Can I just say that I appreciate your candor --

MR. LEAHY: Thank you, sir.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: -- it's commendable, but if you could make sure that the State statutory procurement laws are applied, the 45-day limit, and I would be appreciative. And --

MR. LEAHY: Absolutely, sir. Our staff is very aware of that and they know I will not tolerate things not coming forward in a legal and (indiscernible) manner.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Any other questions on the Secretary's Agenda?

TREASURER KOPP: Just so I understand, Mr. Secretary, regarding the issue that the Comptroller raised about the 45-day wait --

MR. LEAHY: Yes.

TREASURER KOPP: -- and your pledge to us that issues would come as soon as they come up, so this had actually not been brought to you until a couple of weeks ago?

MR. LEAHY: I was aware that it was being worked on and I was under the presumption that there had been a solution. I didn't follow up on that myself, because I assumed it had been taken care of.

TREASURER KOPP: So I think maybe --

MR. LEAHY: Some diligence on my part is called for, absolutely.

TREASURER KOPP: And your staff's understanding of why you made that pledge to us, that it was not just a pledge but an understanding of the --

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Yes.

MR. LEAHY: Absolutely.

TREASURER KOPP: Yeah. Splunk -- is that related to the word for cave?

MR. LEAHY: Well --

GOVERNOR HOGAN: That's a different question.

MR. LEAHY: -- I don't have anything to do --

TREASURER KOPP: Okay.

MR. LEAHY: Thank you so much.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Thank you.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: You mean a cave explorer.

TREASURER KOPP: Yeah.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Yeah.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: They are exploring the bits and bytes.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Really --

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Is there a motion to approve?

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: I had a quick question on Item 12, which is awarding contracts to five vendors to provide tests at public and private schools. My concern is that I think there were 35 proposals but of those only 13 were evaluated and I'm just curious about what happened to the other remaining 20.

SECRETARY GONTRUM: Item A12 is an emergency report from the Department of Health and we do have Secretary Schrader available to answer your questions.

MR. SCHRADER: Good morning, Governor, Treasurer, Mr. Comptroller. What they did in the process is they reviewed the capabilities of the proposals for the 35 and whittled that down to 13, and then evaluated the 13 and came up with the five.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Okay. Could you just give us an idea of how these winning vendors are going to implement --

MR. SCHRADER: Yes.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: -- the program?

MR. SCHRADER: Now we've been, this money, just to give you the background, the money became available in April. It was \$182 million for two years in grant from CDC, Centers for Disease Control. And we wanted to have it be as competitive as possible, so we put together a notice of availability on eMMA

and of course got the 35 offers. We have been working since April with the local school systems to find out how they wanted to approach testing, screening testing, during the school year. So this has been going on for about six months with them. And we gave them options. In some cases, we're going to provide the lab capability to school systems that would like us to provide that service. We also are offering money and we made sure some of the contractors were contractors that they were already familiar with within their systems, so that's why we had the five. We wanted to make sure they could meet the needs statewide. So there has been a lot of work done with the school systems as part of their planning for the fall.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: So how many tests a week do you anticipate and how quickly will the results be received?

MR. SCHRADER: Well, so far we've got 14 school systems that have asked for our help and 70 non-public school systems. The turnaround time on these should be within 48 to 72 hours and with the, you know, which is different from last year. The turnaround time has dropped dramatically since last year.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: These are PCR tests?

MR. SCHRADER: PCR tests, yes. We have point of care tests in our inventory that we have had, you know, millions of them from last year that we held in stockpiles. And we are delivering those on demand to school systems.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: And these are paid for by the grant

--

MR. SCHRADER: By the grant, yes. Yes, we've got, this particular grant is the PCR and then we've had other grants from the federal government that gave us the BinaxNOW tests last year.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Okay. And the systems that have not joined in, are they the large systems or the small systems or --

MR. SCHRADER: It varies. I don't have the data in front of me, sir. We can give you --

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Are they offering free testing and

--

MR. SCHRADER: Yes, some of them are doing it themselves. But we did it in a way that gave as many options as possible. There's no situation that we can't address. We can do pool testing, we can do non-pool testing, they can get reimbursed by us for their testing, or we can provide the lab.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: So what is pool testing?

MR. SCHRADER: I'm sorry, sir?

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Pool testing?

MR. SCHRADER: Pool testing is generally best used when you have low community spread. So if you have low community spread, let's say one

or two percent, pool testing can be more efficient. But as the positivity rate goes up, it gets harder to differentiate. Because what you do is you take, let's say, what they will probably do is take classroom by classroom. So they will do a class, a pool of people within that, children. And they will test. And if it's all negative, then you're good. S3ed, but if you have a higher positivity rate, then you have to go back and retest. So some school systems prefer just to do the straightforward PCR testing individually. So we give them, again, we're trying to make it as customer friendly as possible and, you know, of course the Governor's customer service mandate, we want to make it as easy for them to participate as possible. So we've got a lot of different options.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: So that is implemented already in the systems that have accepted it?

MR. SCHRADER: Yes, sir.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: And are the results made public?

MR. SCHRADER: We haven't --

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Not individually, but I mean --

MR. SCHRADER: Yeah, no, we haven't gone that far yet. But we can take that under consideration and report back.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: I'm the last person to consult on medical advice, but I do think that transparency and, you know, honesty, based on

what's going on down south, which hopefully will not be replicated up here. But you know, this is Mother Nature, and this is, you know, I'm told that everybody is going to be exposed to Delta, and those that are vaccinated are somewhat protected, obviously.

MR. SCHRADER: Right.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: It's a mystery as to when it's going to arrive, and then all of a sudden it vanishes. So, you know, we're, I just hate to think that we're unprepared or without contingencies. And it sounds like at least this one --

GOVERNOR HOGAN: I would say we're more prepared than anyone in America. That's why we have the lowest positivity rate and the lowest case rate of all 50 states. That's why we've got 81 percent of our population over 18 already vaccinated, and nearly 95 percent of our older population vaccinated. But we're preparing. And we have a huge team of people looking at the data every day. It's all very transparent. I think we're also the most transparent state with our dashboard every day, the metrics, the testing, and everything is updated to the CDC and on our website.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: I'm just suggesting, don't mess with Mother Nature.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Yeah --

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: I mean, this is a significant threat and it may disappear, like it surprisingly vanishes in India, for example. So we don't really know. But observing what's going on down in the south, and I agree with the Governor that the adult population in Maryland is more or less protected. It's the kids that are our most valuable asset --

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Yes.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: -- that are not vaccinated and for understandable reasons, because they are doing safety testing, etcetera. But I would urge --

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Well I'll just point out that we're also leading the nation on the 12 to 17 year olds, we're third in the nation on the percentage of vaccinated as of yesterday. I didn't see today's numbers. And we've been having ongoing discussions with the White House about, you know, trying to get information about when they are going to be ready for the five to 11 year olds.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: What are they saying?

GOVERNOR HOGAN: They are not completely clear. I mean, they are saying sometime in the fall and we don't want to skip steps, but we want to make sure we can expedite it, as long as it's safely.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: What about kids less than five?

GOVERNOR HOGAN: I don't think there's any chance of kids less than five having it any time soon.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Okay.

MR. SCHRADER: I did want to mention, the Governor has been also leading us in terms of preparing for surge within children. We've been, we've got Dr. Delbridge leading that effort with a team that is supporting him, analyzing the capacity statewide for pediatrics. And we're also, we're having active discussions with National Children's Center down in D.C. as a backup capacity. So we clearly are planning for the worst and hoping for the best.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: And we're happy with where we are, but we're not taking that for granted by any stretch of the imagination. There are a number of states that are at their peak of hospitalization, at their peak of case rates and positivity. And we're not. We're down 75 percent from where we were.

TREASURER KOPP: Could I ask, Governor, or Mr. Secretary, since we're getting reports back on various things, I think it would be useful, I speak as a grandparent of a public school student, if we could have a presentation, sort of the questions the Comptroller was asking. Which school systems, what proportion of the kids are covered by what? And what is happening? I do think it's a good story. I think everyone should hear it, because now we are focusing on the first week of school, this week, next week, whatever, people are really focused and very,

very concerned. And to have one place where you could set that out I think would be helpful.

MR. SCHRADER: We'll take that back. We're all hands on deck on this as the schools are starting.

TREASURER KOPP: Yes, I'm sure.

MR. SCHRADER: We'll definitely pull that together.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: What's your view about the next four to eight weeks? Are we expecting some situation that is, has been described to me casually as something we really need to pay attention to. Because it's not that we're not doing a good job. It's that the virus is going to find almost everybody, or the variant. So are we prepared for that?

MR. SCHRADER: We're planning for the worst case scenario. And we are monitoring, I've been talking at length to Kevin Sowers over at Hopkins because they actually have the (indiscernible) down in Florida. And we're monitoring the south. And so we are worried about it. But what we are hopeful of is, you know, with the vaccination rate for 12 to 17, we're hoping that's going to blunt this a little bit, with the 80 percent plus that we've vaccinated, we're hoping that that will blunt it. And then, but we're still preparing for the worst.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: We're also working on boosters. And so we have hundreds of people in meetings every day, all week. And we're tracking

it and I would say trying to manage it better than anybody else, and we're been doing that for 18 months and we haven't let up one bit.

MR. SCHRADER: If I might also thank you, Madam Treasurer, for your observation. It has been the Governor's strategy from the very beginning, a year and a half ago, that this was going to be a multiagency response. You saw the evidence of it today. But I really was delighted to hear you observe that. So thank you.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Absolutely. Thank you. Are there any other questions on --

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Move approval.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Is there a second?

TREASURER KOPP: Second.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Three-nothing on the Secretary's Agenda. We're going to move on to the Department of Natural Resources Real Property report. Good morning, Madam Secretary.

MS. HADDAWAY-RICCIO: Good morning, Governor, Madam Treasurer, Mr. Comptroller. For the record, Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. We have seven items on our Real Property Agenda today and we're happy to answer any questions you may have.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Any questions on DNR?

TREASURER KOPP: I have one question. It has been brought to my attention that we're funding local synthetic, and that people who are, synthetic turf fields, people are concerned about the use of synthetic turf. Do you have a response, other than, well, that's the local decision? I know you all were looking into the questions of synthetic turf.

MS. HADDAWAY-RICCIO: Yes, so synthetic turf is an acceptable project under our Program Open Space and we have funded a number of projects in that regard. There are a lot more options on the market now than there used to be in terms of synthetics. And I do know that it does provide additional flexibility to the local jurisdictions at times. But if there is specific information that you would like --

TREASURER KOPP: Yes, people are concerned about the health impacts and maybe I'll just send a letter to you.

MS. HADDAWAY-RICCIO: Sure.

TREASURER KOPP: But there is still significant concern. And people want to know why we are aiding and abetting something that is unhealthy and unsafe, and I would like to say, well, it's now healthy and safe. But I don't have that background information.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Any other questions?

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Move approval if --

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Is there a second?

TREASURER KOPP: Second.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Three-nothing on DNR. Thank you very much.

MS. HADDAWAY-RICCIO: Thank you.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: We're going to move on to the University System.

MR. HICKEY: Good morning, Governor, Madam Treasurer, Mr. Comptroller. Tom Hickey, representing University System of Maryland. We have four items for your consideration this morning and we're happy to answer any questions you may have.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Thank you, Tom. Any questions on University System? Is there a motion?

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Move approval.

TREASURER KOPP: Second.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Three-nothing, move to the Department of Transportation.

MR. SLATER: Good morning, Governor, Madam Treasurer, Mr. Comptroller. For the record, my name is Greg Slater, Secretary of the Maryland

Department of Transportation. The Maryland Department of Transportation is presenting 24 items for your consideration today and we are here to answer any questions you may have.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Questions on Transportation?

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Just a quick question on -- it's a Department of Transportation issue that somehow Secretary Churchill is responsible for. But I will --

(Laughter.)

MR. SLATER: And I will await supporting him --

(Laughter.)

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Anyway, I would move approval on the Transportation Agenda.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: All right. Is there a second? Three-nothing on Transportation. Now we'll move on to you, Mr. Secretary of General Services.

MR. CHURCHILL: Thank you, Governor. Good morning, Governor, Madam Treasurer, and Mr. Comptroller. For the record, I'm Ellington Churchill, Secretary for the Maryland Department of General Services. Today we are presenting 63 items on our Agenda, including one supplemental. We are withdrawing Items 47 and 61. At this time, I would note that our Agenda includes more than \$8 million in capital grants and loans to noteworthy entities across

Maryland, and we have recommendations for award for four small businesses and four minority business enterprises. We are available to answer any questions you have at this time.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Mr. Comptroller has a question.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Yes, a quick question on Item 34-S. This is a three-year, sole source contract to retain Dr. Jon Wainwright as an independent contractor in the State's MBE Disparity Study that you are embarking on. I don't doubt Dr. Wainwright's importance on this (indiscernible) hopefully some of his analysis ability will be transferred to other staff also. I understand he has had a long history with us. But I would like you to, you know, send us information on how many contracts per year are 100 percent compliant, how many are at least 50 percent compliant with the State's MBE program, and how many are below the 50 percent threshold, or you can list them however you want to. I just want to get a sense of the compliance metrics of the program in a supportive way. I know it's difficult to implement.

MR. CHURCHILL: Well, thank you, Mr. Comptroller. We'll look at --

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: (Indiscernible).

MR. CHURCHILL: -- with your staff to make sure that we have gotten all the indicators that you are --

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: And I take it each time it's less than 100 percent compliant, we have to grant, or not grant, but there is some kind of waiver involved. So maybe have a category for that. And once again, I'm not asking it in an adversarial way. I'm just asking it in a can we get better.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Okay. Thank you. Any other questions? Is there a motion?

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Oh, hang on. I have two more. Sorry about that. The Item 37 I had, a request from the Department of Veterans Affairs to exercise a renewal of the contract at Charlotte Hall. And I guess it's a good news thing because they only had a 3.6 percent MBE participation rate, but they tripled that and succeeded. But the goal was 25 percent. So I guess my, I don't know whether Secretary Owings is here, but is the department on top of everything going on at Charlotte Hall?

MR. CHURCHILL: Yes, we do have Secretary Owings on the line.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Well, I'll say hi to him. I haven't seen him in a while, since MACo.

SECRETARY GONTRUM: I understand that he may be with Ms. Sharon Murphy from the Charlotte Hall Veterans Home. Ms. Murphy is not with us --

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Anyway, if Secretary Owings could get back to us on the MBE compliance, but also on the issue of COVID as far as the safety of -- oh, there we go.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: We're having --

(Laughter.)

MR. OWINGS: We're learning this new technology, good morning, Governor, Madam Treasurer, and Mr. Comptroller. Yes, we are here. We are very proud of what you are reading. We just wish there was more time for you to read more. But yes, we're on top of that. And we're also, I wish we could have been there with you all this morning but we had things to attend to here because, of course, you know, we're one of those other pieces of the puzzle, State workers that are holding the line on the outbreak down here. So anything you need to know, we're happy to supply. But yes indeed, we're very pleased with what is going on today.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Well, if there is anyone in the State of Maryland that I associate with digital connectivity and the internet, it is Secretary Owings.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: That's right.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: And --

GOVERNOR HOGAN: He's very good at splunking, I heard.

(Laughter.)

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Mr. Secretary, as long as you are there, I would like you to just update us quickly on the health aspects of COVID and all of the situation concerning your unbelievably important residents.

MR. OWINGS: Mr. Comptroller, I'm actually with, this is like a January and we're facing backward, we're facing forward. Sharon Murphy is on terminal leave beginning today, and I'd like to introduce you to the new administrator, Michelle Cariaso, who is coming in. She is the one that sends the Governor reports every day about where we are. So if you would like to speak to that issue the Comptroller is asking about, Michelle?

MS. CARIASO: Yes, sir. Good morning, everyone. As of today, we have 14 cases that we have confirmed since the start of the second wave of our COVID here in the facility. Out of those 14 cases of the residents, sir, we have recovered 12 cases. Unfortunately, two of the hospice patients that had been infected have expired but they were hospice patients prior to getting the COVID, sir. With our staff, we have nine confirmed cases. We have recovered five of them. Three have no symptoms at all, and one with mild symptoms, sir. That is our current count.

MR. OWINGS: Give them --

SECRETARY GONTRUM: Can you introduce yourself for the record, please?

MS. CARIASO: I'm sorry?

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Introduce yourself for the record.

MS. CARIASO: Oh, my name is Michelle Cariaso, and I am the Director for Charlotte Hall Veterans Home.

SECRETARY GONTRUM: Thank you.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Is the testing free?

MS. CARIASO: Yes, sir. We do twice a week PCR tests and daily rapid if needed. Also, to answer Secretary Owings' question to give you the vaccination rate, as of August 31, our vaccination is 96 percent for our residents. Most of the unvaccinated are hospice patients, thank you so much, sir. And we have 62 percent of our staff vaccinated. Today, September 1, we are offering another vaccination day to give opportunity for the rest of our staff who are interested to get the vaccine. We are giving them free Moderna vaccines today, sir.

MR. OWINGS: Tell them about the boosters, that the Governor is also interested in.

MS. CARIASO: And also for the booster program, sir, we are scheduled with Walgreen's pharmacy to offer boosters to the immunocompromised residents that we have on September 22 and 24.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Thank you for that. Mr. Secretary, thank you for figuring out the technology.

MR. OWINGS: Sure. Thank you all very much. It's an honor to be with you all this morning.

TREASURER KOPP: Did you say 62 percent of the staff?

MS. CARIASO: Yes, ma'am. Our long term care staff are 62 percent fully vaccinated. That will increase today, ma'am. We have high hopes that the majority of the rest of the staff that we have who had thought twice about it will get it today.

TREASURER KOPP: Could you let us know then if its this soon that you think that they will be vaccinated -

GOVERNOR HOGAN: They are all required to be vaccinated now or be subjected to --

TREASURER KOPP: Yes.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: -- rigorous daily tests. We put an order out a couple of weeks ago demanding that they do it. So they are going to do it or they are going to have some issues.

MS. CARIASO: Yes. Yes, sir. We have twice a week PCR tests, universal for the, we do that for the vaccinated and unvaccinated, just because it's, we're, you know, an extra precaution just to make sure that we are doing due

diligence, to make sure that it does not spread, we do not, none of our residents catches the virus here in our home.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Great. Thank you. Any other questions on DGS?

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: I just wanted to ask Secretary Churchill if you could give a general update on the contract concerning Knowledge Services? Where is that? I saw a letter from the Black Caucus that mentioned a lot of concerns and I just wanted to find out what --

MR. CHURCHILL: Sure. Thank you for the question, Mr. Comptroller. After the last time that we had the item on the Agenda and it was withdrawn, we engaged in a series of conversations of course with the Board staff. One of the recommendations that came out of those conversations concerned whether there was a plan to have informational sessions with the business community on exactly what Knowledge Services provides, how to integrate, to learn some of the concerns from our local business community as to how to interface with the contract, as well as to dispel any misconceptions around really where the value or the dollar amount of the contracts are going, whether it's going to an out of state firm or if the local community is truly getting a benefit from this.

So the department in coordination with Knowledge Services has organized a series of informational sessions. So we had the first yesterday.

Unfortunately, the communication that was sent out by Knowledge Services was a little misleading in terms of --

TREASURER KOPP: Very misleading.

MR. CHURCHILL: -- well, yes. And but that was not their intention to mislead. It was just to get out and try to drum up as much interest in the contract. I'm happy to say yesterday was the first session. There were a couple of hundred vendors who attended the session. And from that, 68 percent of the vendors were small business or minority firms. And many have reached back out to Knowledge Services to get more information. And so there is a session today and a session on Thursday, and we encourage anyone who has an interest or a stakehold in the matter to attend or request a link to attend the session. So surely it was to do a little bit of our diligence to educate the business community in Maryland as to what are the terms and aspects of the contract, and we're also talking with our elected officials who have expressed some concerns (indiscernible) the full landscape of where the pushback is on the contract.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Please send a letter to the Legislative Black Caucus. Maybe you could share some of the content with us.

MR. CHURCHILL: We will share any and all content. And again, what we want is to provide the facts and to learn really the areas of concern from the business community.

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: All right. Thank you.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Any other questions on DGS?

COMPTROLLER FRANCHOT: Move approval.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Is there a second?

TREASURER KOPP: Second.

GOVERNOR HOGAN: Three-nothing. Thank you all very much.

This concludes the BPW.

(Whereupon, at 10:55 a.m., the meeting was concluded.)