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# **BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS**

*GOVERNOR'S RECEPTION ROOM, SECOND FLOOR, STATE HOUSE  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND*

**May 21, 2025**  
**10:07 a.m.**

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# PRESENT

## **HONORABLE WES MOORE**

Governor

## **HONORABLE BROOKE E. LIERMAN**

Comptroller

## **HONORABLE DERECK E. DAVIS**

Treasurer

## **JOHN GONTRUM**

Secretary, Board of Public Works

## **ATIF CHAUDHRY**

Secretary, Department of General Services

## **JOSH KURTZ**

Secretary, Department of Natural Resources

## **THOMAS HICKEY**

Director of Procurement and Real Property Initiatives,  
University System of Maryland

## **VALERIE RADOMSKY**

Chief Procurement Officer, Department of Transportation

## **KAYLEE BROUSSEAU**

Assistant Recording Secretary, Board of Public Works

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# PROCEEDINGS

GOVERNOR MOORE: Good morning, everybody. Good morning. Please take a seat. Please take a seat. Thank you. Well, good morning and welcome to this wet but wonderful meeting of the Board of Public Works. Before we begin, I would just -- I just wanted to take a moment to say a few words about Maryland's credit rating and the state of the regional economy.

Where since January of 2020, we have seen how this new Administration has just leveled consistent attacks on Maryland, and our people, and our economy. We have seen how these attacks that are being leveled on Maryland -- that these are -- that these are not just glancing blows. Many of them actually are direct attacks, and that they are attacks that are impacting the entire National Capital Region. And it's including our neighbors in Washington, D.C. and including our neighbors inside of Virginia, where we have seen how this this DOGE project has now laid off tens of thousands of federal workers, and sending public servants, people who have raised their hands to serve our society, and has now sent them to the unemployment line without cause. Many of these decisions have actually been illegal. These deep cuts to these federal agencies, they have reverberated in our communities because many of these people who we're talking about, these are our friends, these are our neighbors. Many of them, a disproportionate number of them, are Marylanders.

And this blunting economic activity is being seen not just throughout the public sector, but also being seen throughout the private sector. That basic services, from public education to healthcare, are now hanging in the balance. And the result is nothing short of a self-inflicted economic regional crisis that has now been ignited by the Trump-Vance Administration, and is

having very real consequences in our communities and very real consequences on our macro-economic outlook where both D.C. and Maryland both saw our Moody's credit rating downgraded due to the impacts of federal policy. That across the Potomac, Virginia is now on track to have its highest unemployment rate since COVID. That even the Smithsonian was just downgraded by Moody's because of these federal actions. And we all saw that just last week that the regional crisis is also spreading nationwide because the credit rating of the United States of America was just downgraded by Moody's. So we recognize that Maryland faces a unique exposure to what is happening to our neighbors and the decisions being made by our neighbors in Washington, D.C.

And as long as that chaos in Washington continues, there will be chaos that we are seeing in our national markets, in our prices, and things that the State of Maryland is going to have to deal with. And it's part of the focus why we talk about things like having to diversify our economy off of Washington, D.C. because our economic growth should not depend on who sits in the Oval Office. And the thing that I do know, though, is that even in the face of these serious challenges, we will continue to work together to shore up our economy and making sure that we're protecting our people.

That even in just these past months, we've been able to turn a deficit into a surplus. We've been able to give the middle class, the ones who need it most, tax relief. We've been able to reduce spending by over two billion dollars, the largest amount that has been cut in the Maryland budget in 16 years. We've also created nearly 100,000 new jobs, achieved some of the lowest rates of unemployment in the nation, and experienced some of the fastest growth rates in America. By the way, that 100,000 jobs have been created in these first two years of this Administration is more than the previous Administration got done in eight years.

And the national credit rating agencies are also taking notice where last Thursday, Fitch reaffirmed Maryland's AAA bond rating with a stable outlook despite the challenges of Washington. They cited our strong financial resilience, our diverse economy, our disciplined strategic approach to balance the State's budget. Thursday's report from Fitch reflects what we know already to be true, that despite the federal government's attacks, our fiscal outlook remains strong. And it's not lost to me that one of the government instruments that allows us to remain steady and have steady fiscal ground is this body, the Board of Public Works. This Board, this very unique (indiscernible) nationally. That this Board empowers us to remain nimble in the face of uncertainty and remain courageous in the times of chaos. It's one of Maryland's great institutions, and Marylanders are counting on us to stay alert inside this moment.

So I want to thank my fellow members of the Board, our Comptroller and our Treasurer, for all of the leadership and the partnership. Not when it's easy, but particularly when it's hard. I want to thank all these teams and the teams who are continuing to do the work to make sure that our state remains on strong and solid footing. And I want to thank all of Marylanders, who understand that even in tough times Marylanders are tougher. So as we continue to respond to these historic challenges, make no mistake. In Maryland, we will always pay our debts and we will always put Marylanders first. And we'll always listen to whatever is on the Treasurer's cell phone.

(Laughter.)

TREASURER DAVIS: The Governor, I don't know what he's talking about.

GOVERNOR MOORE: That was my cue. I am done.

Are there any opening comments from my colleagues?

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Well said, thank you. No.

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TREASURER DAVIS: You know what? Since the Governor opened the door, let me say -- let me say this about the credit rating because I do take that personally. Everything that Moody's said about Maryland, they've said every single year since I've been Treasurer. They complained about the high debt, the pension liability, blah, blah, blah. But at the end of the day, they always reaffirmed our AAA bond rating.

I can only speak for my time, but they said it in '22. They said it in '23. They said it in '24. They said it in a Republican administration. They said it under a Democratic administration. So it bears the question -- and they've also said -- you all may or may not know this, but by the numbers, Maryland hasn't been a AAA bond rating state in a while. What they said was, as the Governor alluded to, they liked the fact that we have a unique body, unique meaning one in the country, a Board of Public Works that can make out-of-session decisions.

They like the Spending Affordability Committee, the Capital Debt. All the different committees we have to make decisions, they like that. And so they gave us credit for these qualitative measures where we fell just a bit short on the quantitative measures. So it begs the question, if we had all of these problems -- at least I'm speaking of my tenure -- but we still got a AAA bond rating, what happened this time? We still have the same debt. We still have the same liability. Everything's the same, except what's going on now from Washington.

And as was noted, the District of Columbia was downgraded. There are issues going on in Virginia. All of these places that are near the federal government. And you look at the federal contracting, and employee layoffs, and all the uncertainty, the tariffs -- all of that that's going on, and that's what they pointed to. That's what they pointed to. So when you say it's not the administration, the national administration, that its local, I'm here to tell you



everything that's wrong locally, it's been that way, or for people whose perception or whatever, it's been that way, at least for the last four years, and there was no downgrade. No downgrade, but I get -- and the argument I made in -- and now you've really got to forgive me -- this isn't supposed to be, in my view, maybe I have a different view. This is a bond rating. So we're talking about -- really when you're talking about a bond rating, it's supposed to be about the ability to repay bonds. Your credit worthiness, your credit worthiness. And I did some checking. No state has failed to repay its bonds since 1933. That was Arkansas under the Great Depression, so I give them a pass for that. But for 92 consecutive years, every state has met its bonds.

So what we're really talking about is not credit worthiness because every state -- this does not apply to municipalities -- but every state should be a AAA bond rating, if it's just about that. This is about your fiscal picture and outlook. And that's a fair discussion, but it shouldn't be about your bond rating. The bond rating is just your ability to pay back bonds. And quite frankly, if I'm buying your bond, I don't care what your fiscal outlook is unless it affects your ability to repay bonds.

And since states can't file for bankruptcy or anything like that, it's prohibited by federal law, that's off the table. But I guess where Moody's -- and Moody's said to me, "Well, by your definition, every state should be a AAA rated state." Yeah, absolutely. Every state can pay its bond. But I know in the case of Maryland, when you're paying \$229,000, they got to give you something. They're not going to just hand out, as we say in school, A's for nothing. So for their -- and when you're selling subscriptions, you know you've got to give people a reason to buy it. So you know to hell with Moody's.

GOVERNOR MOORE: We knew it was coming. We knew it was coming.

TREASURER DAVIS: So that's -- now you're seeing why, if you also do some research, more and more states are also moving away from Moody's.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Right.

TREASURER DAVIS: They're not the standard bearer that they once was. So now that I've taken up enough time and I've gotten it off my chest, we can move on, sir.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Perfect.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Thanks.

GOVERNOR MOORE: (Indiscernible)?

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: No, I can't top that.

(Laughter.)

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Thanks.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Thank you.

We will go ahead and get us started with the business of the day.  
Mr. Secretary, good morning. Good to see you.

MR. GONTRUM: Good morning, Governor. Good to see you.  
And good morning to you, Mr. Treasurer and Madam Comptroller. There are 14 items on the Secretary's Agenda this morning and happy to answering any questions.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Great, thank you. Is there any discussion on the Secretary's Agenda?

TREASURER DAVIS: I would like to, Item 11. I am -- let me open by saying I'm supporting the Attorney General, the Attorney General's request. That I think it's a legitimate -- it's a legitimate request, but is there anyone here that maybe can talk about this a little bit? If not, I'll just ramble on.

MR. GONTRUM: Yes, sir. Mr. Treasurer, so Item 11 is a request from the Office of the Attorney General to approve compensation for outside

legal counsel in the matter of Doe v. the Office of Public Defender of Maryland.  
And we have Mr. Peter Berns, the general counsel for the Office of the Attorney General online.

And Mr. Berns, I'm going to go ahead and send you an unmute.

TREASURER DAVIS: He can hear me or he's getting it together?

MR. BERNs: Yes, sir. Good morning, I can hear you.

TREASURER DAVIS: Good morning, sir. Again, this isn't about the validity of the Attorney General's request, so I don't want it to be taken as such. But I am deeply disturbed by the facts of this. Is it true that it went before a mediator, a retired -- I don't know if it's a federal judge or a circuit court judge, but did that occur?

MR. BERNs: You know, I also have online with me today Rob Scott, who's the chief of the Civil Litigation Division. I think if we could get him online too or get him on board and unmuted, he'd be in a better position to ask questions about the specifics of the litigation. You know, my role as general counsel is involved in shepherding through this process by which we retain assistant counsel and special counsel for the Attorney General's Office.

Can we can we bring Rob on?

MR. SCOTT: Good morning, can you hear me?

GOVERNOR MOORE: Good morning.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Yep.

MR. SCOTT: Okay. Yes, Mr. Treasurer. I'm happy to answer any questions that you may have.

TREASURER DAVIS: Did the -- was this matter -- did it go for mediation? And if so, I thought I read, but I could be mistaken, this was a judge who, if the mediation occurred if I read it correctly, who I guess ruled on this. Can you explain what happened with the mediation?

MR. SCOTT: Well, there's a mediation in the civil lawsuit that's been scheduled. It's going to be taking place within the next few months to try to settle the case. Prior to the lawsuit being filed and prior to our office's involvement in this matter, the parties to the lawsuit agreed to essentially a name-clearing hearing before a retired judge. And our office did not participate in that. That was simply conducted between the Office of the Public Defender and the plaintiff in the lawsuit.

TREASURER DAVIS: And so it sounds like we're expecting this to be settled, so we're hiring outside counsel to handle basically settlement negotiations. Is that essentially it?

MR. SCOTT: Well, there is a lawsuit that's pending. And the Public Defender, Natasha Dartigue, has requested -- she's made a formal request from -- to our office for representation in that lawsuit. At this point, the only thing that's happened is there's been a mediation scheduled and the parties have agreed to defer any other litigation activity until that mediation is complete.

TREASURER DAVIS: But she's selected -- she's already selected her own attorneys and is requesting the Attorney General's Office to, in essence, foot the bill for lack of a better word. The attorney, she's already selected?

MR. SCOTT: Well, I don't know that I can get into too many details about that in a public meeting, Mr. Treasurer. All I can --

TREASURER DAVIS: Hold on, hold on, hold on. Let me stop there. I hate that answer. People, you're asking for us to vote on this. But you want us to vote in the dark, so we're not really -- we're not -- this is the people's business. Not my money, not your money. So if we're going to vote to spend money, we're not -- at least as far as I'm concerned, we're not going to say that we're not going to discuss it, you all just vote it and that's the end of it. If we can't discuss the case, then I can't cast a vote for it.

MR. SCOTT: I'm happy to discuss the case and answer whatever questions you have to the extent I can do so without disclosing information that's confidential and privileged. There was a written submission submitted to the Board, but I'm constrained in what I can say in a public meeting, given the sensitivity of --

TREASURER DAVIS: This hasn't gotten a trial yet?

MR. SCOTT: I'm sorry, Your Honor?

TREASURER DAVIS: I thought this hasn't gone to trial yet?

MR. SCOTT: It has not, Your Honor -- it has not, Mr. Treasurer.

MR. BERNES: I think I could jump in, maybe, and help clarify. Mr. Treasurer, help clarify the process here. And this may address your question. So under the State Government Article, a State officer or employee, if they are named as a defendant in a lawsuit, is allowed to request representation from the Attorney General, which the public defender, Public Defender Dartigue did in this matter.

In the lawsuit, there are two defendants, the Office of Public Defender and Public Defender Dartigue. So Public Defender Dartigue exercised her rights under the State Government Article to request representation by the Attorney General. There is defined procedure under 12-304, and the subsequent sections about procedure, we have to go through the Office of the Attorney General to determine whether she is eligible to be -- whether a State employee is eligible to be represented by the Attorney General.

We went through that procedure and made the necessary findings, which are spelled out under the State Government Article, and determined that she was eligible to be represented. And then under State Government 6-105(c), the Attorney General then has the option of either undertaking the representation by assigning an Assistant Attorney General to represent her or he also has the

option of engaging special counsel to represent her.

It is the case that the counsel that we have engaged, or the law firm Miller, Miller, & Canby, had already started representing her and appeared on her behalf and filed an appearance on her behalf prior to our actually deciding to -- or going through this, completing the process that I just described. So at that point, after we approve -- after we find her eligible, she then enters into a legal representation agreement with the Office of the Attorney General that defines the terms of our representing her. And that legal representation agreement also defines that we have chosen the law firm that she recommended, Miller, Miller, & Canby to represent her on our behalf in defense of -- on behalf of the Attorney General in defense of the matter.

The State Government Article, under 6-105(c)(2), requires us to come to -- the Attorney General to come to the Board of Public Works on the specific issue of your approving the compensation that we are offering the firm to represent her, which is spelled out in the documents as \$450 an hour, which is well within the mainstream of the rates that the Attorney General contracts for under various assistant counsel and special counsel contracts. So I don't know, hopefully, that helps address your question. If not, I'd be happy to answer a follow up.

TREASURER DAVIS: No, you gave a very complete and concise answer. I certainly appreciate it. So let me just end by saying -- because when you read the details of this case, and certainly, the ruling of the mediator, the retired judge, bluntly, we might as well go into -- straight into settlement negotiations. I mean, reading -- just reading what the retired judge wrote, this does not look good for the State at all. And I expect to see you all at some point in the future with a settlement before the Board of Public Works asking us to approve something that, quite frankly, we shouldn't be in this position to have to

do.

And I know I've been a pain in the behind before about settlements, but as we start to look at, you know, our balance sheet a little more closely now, and as we start to, you know, scrutinize things, this is not a case -- this is high school-ish, point blank. Just the facts of this case. Again, this isn't about the Attorney General's Office. You're doing what needs to be done to protect the State, so that's not my -- that's not my issue, but my issue -- and getting sued isn't my issue because that happens. I've been sued for stuff I didn't even know I did. But by the position of being Treasurer, I'm a named party to the suit. But if the things that occurred in this case that were ruled by the retired judge to have happened, this is unacceptable for a public official. So thank you very much.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Can I just follow up?

Thanks, Mr. Treasurer. And thanks for being here, I just -- that was helpful clarification. So when you talk about whether somebody is eligible for representation by the OAG, that is -- so 12-304, my understanding is, you know, it has to do with if you act with malice or you're grossly negligent and items like that. Is that correct? That's the standard? There are standards laid out in 12-304 that your office goes through to determine whether an employee is eligible; is that correct?

MR. BERNES: That's correct, Comptroller Lierman. Under 12-304, we need to make a determination that the employee was acting within the scope of their employment, that they acted without malice, and they were not grossly negligent. And only if they meet those criteria, are they eligible for representation by the Attorney General. And the law also provides that in the course of the representation, if the end result is that they are found negligent, we actually do have a right to claw back some of the expenses from them.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Got it, and that's helpful to know.

And then a follow-up quickly is, you know, agencies are represented by the Office of the Attorney General. So for instance, I have a great assistant AAG Renee Nacrelli, Murray Singerman, and a great team. They all handle the cases that our agency is involved with.

We have a lot going on. And they tolerate me pretending to play litigators sometimes and, you know, reminiscing. But they -- my understanding is the Office of the Public Defender actually doesn't have that. They're different. And so they wouldn't have -- like Public Defender Dartigue doesn't have sort of her own AAG, like I do or like the Treasurer's Office does or every other agency; is that correct?

MR. BERNES: That's correct.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Okay.

MR. BERNES: The Office of the Public Defender does not have a principal counsel or other AAGs assigned to represent the agency on a day-to-day basis, which is one of the things that makes this situation different than the typical agency and employee defense.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Okay. That is helpful. So thank you for that. I appreciate it. Thanks for being here.

GOVERNOR MOORE: All right.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: That's it.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Thank you both very much.

MR. BERNES: Thank you.

MR. SCOTT: Thank you.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Are there any other items for discussion on the Secretary's Agenda?

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: No.



GOVERNOR MOORE: Okay. May I have a motion to approve the Secretary's Agenda?

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Motion to approve the Secretary's Agenda.

GOVERNOR MOORE: May I have a second?

TREASURER DAVIS: Second.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Outstanding. Thank you so much.  
Thanks, Mr. Secretary.

We will now move on to the Department of Natural Resources.  
Mr. Secretary, good morning.

MR. KURTZ: Morning, Mr. Governor, Madam Comptroller, Mr. Treasurer. For the record, Josh Kurtz, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources. The Department has eight items for your consideration today. I'm happy to answer any questions that you may have.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Thank you so much. Are there any items for discussion for the DNR?

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: No, I just want to say how much I love the splash pads. And there's a -- there's money for splash pad. I love them so much I passed legislation about splash pads, when I was a delegate. So yay splash pads. Thank you.

GOVERNOR MOORE: I love a splash pad.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: I mean, we need more of them.  
Climate change means hotter weather. We can't build lots of pools. We can build lots of splash pads. Thank you.

GOVERNOR MOORE: May I have a motion to approve the DNR Agenda?

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Motion to approve the DNR

Agenda.

GOVERNOR MOORE: And is there a second?

TREASURER DAVIS: Second.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Outstanding. Thanks, Mr. Secretary.

Good to see you.

We will now move on to University of Maryland. Mr. Hickey,  
good morning.

MR. HICKEY: Good morning, Governor, Mr. Treasurer, Madam  
Comptroller. Tom Hickey representing the University System of Maryland.  
There are three items on our agenda. I am withdrawing Item 3-RP. And I'm  
happy to answer any questions you have.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Okay. Motion to approve the --

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Yep.

GOVERNOR MOORE: -- USM Agenda?

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Motion to approve the USM

Agenda.

GOVERNOR MOORE: May I have a motion to second?

TREASURER DAVIS: Second.

GOVERNOR MOORE: All right, thank you very much.

MR. HICKEY: Thank you.

GOVERNOR MOORE: We'll proceed with the MDOT Agenda.

Ms. Radomsky, good morning.

MS. RADOMSKY: Good morning, Governor, Madam  
Comptroller, and Mr. Treasurer. For the record, my name is Valerie Radomsky,  
Chief Procurement Officer at the Maryland Department of Transportation.  
Today, we are presenting 21 agenda items for your consideration. And we have  
representatives available to answer any questions you may have.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: I just wanted to make a comment about 21-C, which was a supplemental item regarding Apron reconstruction at BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport. I have spoken ad nauseam about how the BPW should only be presented with items under protest that are in clear alignment with our regulatory requirement of substantial State interest. And I want to give credit to MDOT, who took that message seriously, because this is your very first item that you've done this with and I appreciate that.

Also, a number of other factors that went into my decision to vote yes on this item. One of which is the length of time that you have been working on making sure that this could appear before the MSBCA. This is not something where you gave them a week to make a decision. So I appreciate that there has been adequate time, in my opinion, to review the appeal and there hasn't been action to move forward. And really key is that this is \$20 million of federal money that we'll lose, if we don't advance this.

So you know, as the Trump Administration continues to work tirelessly to freeze the disbursement of federal grants and loans, and a Republican-controlled Congress really debates sort of draconian cuts, I think it's really important that we ensure that we are not giving up money that we already have in the pipeline. So failing to advance this item today would risk losing \$20 million from the federal government that we would likely never see again. So I believe that the risk of lost federal funding to support the project coupled with the delayed MSBCA hearing, constitutes a clear need to move to protect the State's substantial interests and move this project forward. So thank you.

Thank you, Governor.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Thanks. Is there a motion to approve the MDOT Agenda?

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Motion to approve the MDOT

Agenda.

GOVERNOR MOORE: And is there a second?

TREASURER DAVIS: Second.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Outstanding. Thanks so much, Ms.

Radomsky. Thank you.

We will conclude with the with the DGS Agenda. Good morning,  
Secretary Chaudhry.

MR. CHAUDHRY: Good morning, sir. Mr. Governor, Madam  
Comptroller, and Mr. Treasurer. For the record, I'm Atif Chaudhry, Secretary of  
the Maryland Department of General Services. Today, the Department is  
presenting 60 items on our agenda, including two hand carry items. Our agenda  
does feature 16 capital grants and loans totaling over \$6.3 million. And an item --  
I want to highlight one.

That's Item 1-CGL, which provides \$300,000 in State support to  
Operation: THRIVING ACRES located in Kent County. Operation: THRIVING  
ACRES provides farm therapy and therapeutic horticultural programing for  
veterans as well as first responders to address post-traumatic stress and related  
disorders. This funding will support the construction of a new barn for an herbal  
processing and dehydration facility and a commercial kitchen, as well as teaching  
space for everyone involved.

As we continue to keep an eye on minority business participation  
in our contracting, our agenda does include seven contract awards and  
modifications to certified minority businesses totaling more than \$8.9 million.  
And we have agency representatives here to answer any questions you may have.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Operation: THRIVING ACRES is great.  
I understand we have a speaker request from Item 8-CGL, which is a request to  
award two capital grants totaling \$250,000 to the Board of Directors of the

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National Federation for the Blind to support the design and the development of a new museum for the blind people's movement in Baltimore City. We will ask that all the speakers limit their remarks to no more than three minutes.

And Secretary, if we could hold folks to that?

And I'd like to first recognize Mr. John Pare representing the National Federation for the Blind, who has signed up to speak in support of this item. John, it is great to see you. Great to be with you.

MR. PARE: All right. Mr. Governor, thank you. Comptroller, Treasurer, it's an honor to appear before you on behalf of the National Federation of the Blind and the Museum of the Blind People's Movement. I have two quick stories related to this. First, Jacobus tenBroek was the founder of the National Federation of the Blind. He founded the NFB on November 16th, 1940. We have what is referred to as the tenBroek papers. We really kind of outmaneuvered the University of California, Berkeley, where he was the professor, to have his papers.

One interesting item in the collection, we have a copy that I think is going to be passed out to you. It's a letter from Thurgood Marshall, August 18th, 1953. Where in his preparation, this is Thurgood Marshall, on the Brown vs. Board of Education lawsuit, he wrote to Dr. TenBroek because Dr. tenBroek was an expert on the 14th Amendment, asking to meet with him and consult in his preparation. The original copy of that letter is in Baltimore and would be part of our museum, along with a number of other things.

Second, we have -- January 4th, 1809, was the birth of Louis Braille, who created the braille code, which is used by blind people for literacy. 2009 would have been his 200th birthday. We advocated for a law in the U.S. Congress, which was passed, to authorize and require the U.S. mint to make a coin to commemorate his 200th birthday. It has proper tactile coin. It's the only

U.S. coin to ever have proper tactile braille. I think there's a copy -- there's a demonstrator. There's one of those being passed around, too, up by you. I will need to get the coin back.

(Laughter.)

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: We can't accept anything.

GOVERNOR MOORE: I'm glad you said that in advance, actually. I already saw a place in my office where this thing was going.

All right. We hear you loud and clear, John.

MR. PARE: And I was part of the team that consulted with the mint to help design the coin. It was a great success in 2009. And one of the things -- we were also partnered with NASA at the time and asked them to fly two coins on STS-125 Atlantis, which took off on May 9th, 2009, returned on May 24th. The astronaut, one of the astronauts on that mission, Greg Johnson, in a ceremony orchestrated by then majority leader Steny Hoyer at the U.S. Capitol, Astronaut Greg Johnson, in his uniform, came and presented the two coins to the National Federation of the Blind in a very touching ceremony. Those two coins are also in our collection in Baltimore. I thank you for your time and urge you to approve our request.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Thank you.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Thank you.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Thanks so much for coming and for all your work.

MR. PARE: Thank you.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Thank you.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Yeah, it's pretty amazing. Thanks so much. Great to be with you.

I'd next like to call Item 56-GM. And that's a request from the

Department of General Services to grant a one-year exception to the termination of bond funding for the planning and design of a new prerelease unit for women in Baltimore City.

And Secretary Chaudhry, I'd like to bring it back to you to formally introduce the item.

MR. CHAUDHRY: Thank you, sir. Item 56-GM is a request for a one-year extension of \$3 million in capital bond funds for the Life Skills and Reentry Center for Women, which will be operated by our partners at the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. The Gender-Responsive Prerelease Act passed by the Legislature in the 2020 legislative session directs DPSCS to construct the facility, which will assist female and female incarcerated individuals with developing knowledge, skills, and credentials while providing gender-responsive services to enable a more stable reentry into the community from the DPSCS system.

DGS and DPSCS have been working collaboratively to advance this project and move it forward. With regard to the current status of the project as of today, after an extensive search for locations for this prerelease facility in accordance with the requirements of legislation, a site has been selected for the project located in Baltimore City. A consultant was brought on board, with expertise in this field, to assist in the development of a part one and part two program of requirements, which is required for all capital projects. This has been completed and has been approved by both DGS and DBM.

We're currently in the process of soliciting for the design, for design services. The solicitation for architectural and design services was issued on February 6th of this year. Bids for the design services were received on March 11th. We expect contract award, Board of Public Works approval, and notice to proceed to be issued by September of this year. We're expecting design to be

approximately 16 months, and design to be completed early calendar year 2027.

With regard to construction, we expect the solicitation for the construction contract to be issued by May of 2027, once design is complete, and we expect the construction contract award, Board of Public Works approval, and notice to proceed issued by September of that year, September of 2027.

Construction will take approximately two years, a little over two years, to complete. We expect construction to be completed by the end of calendar year 2029.

The role of DGS in this project is to design and oversee the construction of the facility to fulfill the reentry service delivery requirements set forth in the law and based on the programmatic requirements derived from both DPSCS and the consultants on this project. The role of DPSCS is to implement and deliver reentry programs to women in services that -- in this specialized facility, in accordance with the programmatic needs of the incarcerated population in Maryland.

We appreciate the Board's consideration of this time extension for one year. And both Secretary Scruggs and myself are here to answer any questions you may have.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Thanks so much, Mr. Secretary.

And I understand we have a speaker request also for this item. So before opening up the questions, I'd like to recognize Ms. Monica Cooper, who is representing the Maryland Justice Project.

MS. COOPER: Thank you.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Good to see you. The Maryland Justice Project and the Women's Pre-release Equity Coalition, who signed up to speak in opposition to this item. Ms. Cooper, it's good to see you again. Thank you.

MS. COOPER: Yes, sir. Thank you.



First thing I want to do is get my anxiety down. Because, one, I never thought that I had the power, money, or access to ever be standing here. I'm from Sandtown, West Baltimore, formerly incarcerated, and a product of the women's pre-release center. I am thriving. I'm successful. Taxes are still too high.

(Laughter.)

MS. COOPER: I'm paying my taxes. Do wish they were lower. I'm a single woman with no kids. I got two dogs, can't claim even them. I'm here. And as one who more than anybody in this room, I would love to see our Governor succeed. This woman right here, she is absolutely fantastic. I love working with her. I'm always in the facility. I'm always trying to give as much as I can because I know what reentry looks like. I know what it looks like. I'm impacted by it.

With that said, two things can be true at the same time. I think that the position is wrong on this matter. I started out this journey in 2016 by myself wondering, "Who could I get to sponsor a bill? How do I do it? How do I get this done?" It took us years to finally get the bill passed. The bill was passed and it was vetoed by our previous Governor Hogan. We went back and we got the override, so we are looking at 2021. It's 2025. And 2029 would make it a whole 20 years, since that facility had been shut down. The facility was shut down in 2009 for whatever reasons.

But for me, being a woman and believing in Title IX and the Lilly Ledbetter of bills and believing in rights for women, I totally think that it's wrong for any human being to think that for 20 years, men can have a facility and women can't. Just on its face alone, two decades is not acceptable by like no administration, to be honest with you. And trust me, I got a lot of pictures of me and you.

GOVERNOR MOORE: That's right.

MS. COOPER: But yeah, I just wanted to start there and kind of get my anxiety down. And now, I can take these glasses off because I need readers. And I can kind of get to the meat of it and try to keep it down to maybe another two and a half minutes. But one of the reasons why we are opposing the extension of the bond funding for the Life Skills and Reentry Center for Women is because the plans for the facility violate the Gender-Responsive Act passed in 2021.

First, the law requires that women receive their programs and services at their pre-release facility, not at the BTTC. That is going to be an overwhelmingly male short-term jail, and whose programs are not designed for women in pre-release preparing to go home after being away for years. Second, the size of the planned facility is too small to house all the women who will be eligible to go there. Women will then still be stuck at MCIW in violation of the statute, or will have a far shorter prerelease opportunity. No taxpayer money should be spent on a project that violates the law.

In addition to violating the law, this is just a bad plan. Wow, all right. I'm on page two. The location in Baltimore -- the location in the Baltimore Detention Center Complex is unsafe for the women and their families. The drug dealing is rampant. The community is other prison facilities and abandoned, broken down industrial buildings. The site is too small to accommodate safe outdoor areas for the women and parking for visitors.

As veteran correctional officers told us, the women will fail at that location. It's going to cost more to build on this small site than on a larger site. Before we agree to fund this plan, I invite you and your staff on a site visit to see for yourselves. And just hearking on, you know, some of the things that you've said that the -- you wouldn't make any policies or any moves without the

impacted community. I am that person. I might not be an architect and I might not have the specialties of the Department of General Services, and I certainly don't know about the money -- that very tight budget. But what I do know is that we have to find a way to get this done in the immediate and I don't think extending this is going to help us at all.

I am, again, from West Baltimore. And the mother in West Baltimore with \$5 and seven children has to find a way to feed them. Could be a bag of rice with gravy on it, but they're going to go to bed with their bellies full. So everybody is operating on a tight budget. I just think that we really need to not pass this extension and really reconsider what we are doing in this -- with this opportunity, and it is a great opportunity. I've had so many therapeutic sessions and so many opportunities at the pre-release center. It allowed me to see what my position was in my actions, to see what I'm doing to create issues in my own life. I can't -- it's invaluable.

I'm a graduate of the University of Baltimore. I plan to go back get my master's degree. And none of my success would have happened had it not been for that. And I think because folks have specialties in areas that are not formerly incarcerated people, they could never understand or see the insight of how we can cut down on crime. I think it's said that a ounce of something is worth a pound of cure, an ounce of prevention. And I think that's what this opportunity presents us.

We're going to continue to pay -- taxpayers continue to pay and pay for this revolving reentry process. We're paying a lot of money for each person that enters the facility. And I think that this opportunity gives us a chance to put mothers in their homes with their children doing homework at night. We wouldn't have to worry about the juveniles because the mother would be with her children. I just don't want us to miss the opportunity, and I still support you

guys --

GOVERNOR MOORE: We appreciate it.

MS. COOPER: -- either way.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Great. Thank you.

MS. COOPER: I just had to say that because out of love and care,  
you don't let people go down the wrong road.

MR. CHAUDHRY: Thank you, Ms. Cooper. That's three  
minutes.

MS. COOPER: Oh, that's the time?

MR. CHAUDHRY: Yes, ma'am.

MS. COOPER: All right, bro. Thanks.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Thank you.

GOVERNOR MOORE: We appreciate you.

MS. COOPER: Thank you.

GOVERNOR MOORE: All right. Thank you. Thank you for  
your voice, for your leadership.

MS. COOPER: Thank you.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Thanks.

GOVERNOR MOORE: I would also -- I'd like to invite Secretary  
Chaudhry and also Secretary Scruggs to be able to join the podium as well.

Good morning. Good morning, Madam Secretary.

MS. SCRUGGS: Good morning, sir.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Mr. Treasurer?

TREASURER DAVIS: No, I'll just say this. And I want to thank  
the Secretary and others who've participated. We've had calls and talked. Manny  
(ph.), you were there. This was not an easy issue. Some of the concerns raised by  
the speaker were raised by others. But I guess, you know, Voltaire said it best.

"We can't let the desire for the perfect be the enemy of the good." And I believe, ultimately, this is going to do good -- do some good. And therefore, that's why I'm supporting it.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Thank you. Is there any other comments or questions on this item or anything else in the DGS Agenda?

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Sure. On this item, I'd just like to ask for it to be separated out from the others. This is a request for an exemption for the automatic termination of funding. So I know we're talking about the design of it, but as frequent visitors to the Board of Public Works will know, I do not -- I have a use it or lose it stance on capital money. And so regardless of whether you're a State agency or a private grantee, and so I will be voting to disapprove this.

And I also want to thank Ms. Cooper for coming and thank you to the Secretary and others on your team for talking with us about your plans for this facility. And I just want to encourage you to continue to engage with the General Assembly members, who have championed this for a long time. I was -- the Treasurer and I voted for this bill and voted to override the veto.

And so we have a long history with it and feel really strongly about it as well. And I know that there are many folks -- you know, Ms. Cooper and the Coalition and General Assembly members who, you know, want to make sure we get this right. So thank you for continuing to engage with them on it. That's 56.

I have a couple other items. On 49, I just wanted to give a shout out to Assistant Secretary Wendy Scott-Napier and the DGS Office of Real Estate for incorporating a dedicated climate and sustainability section for tenant-lease items. You know, I continue to believe that incorporating sustainability and resilience details onto agenda items for the Board of Public Works will help demonstrate the ways in which our State is working to achieve our climate goals.

And I just wanted to say, you know, in Item 49-LT, the Assistant Secretary and the DGS office did a great job, you know, pulling this together for the ten-year lease of office space in Owings Mills for the State police. So thank you for that.

And then, I do have a question about Item 33-S-MOD, which is a DHCD item, to increase funding on a contract to provide training services for the weatherization provider network. Should I address those to you or to the DHCD?

MR. CHAUDHRY: We have representatives here from DHCD on the call.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Okay.

MR. GONTRUM: Who would you like me to get? Secretary Day is not on.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: He's away.

MR. CHAUDHRY: Yeah, he's away.

(Pause.)

MR. GONTRUM: Oh, looks like Nicola Tran.

MS. TRAN: Can you bring the whole team up?

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: They can't decide who wants to answer.

MS. TRAN: Good morning, can you hear me?

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Yep.

MS. TRAN: Good morning, this is Nicola Tran. I'm Director of the energy efficiency programs at DHCD.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Great.

MS. TRAN: And this contract is for one of my programs.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Okay. Great. Thank you. So we approved this contract a little over a year ago.

MS. TRAN: Yes.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: It's a great program. It's a great initiative. However, we are now being asked to add over \$1.5 million to the contract, while the MBE compliance at the 15 percent goal sits at zero percent. So I know there are many factors that go into goal setting and supporting prime compliance with the agreed upon goal, but what is your -- what are you doing to ensure that we meet that 15 percent because JCN Partners has not done it so far. And so I would love to hear some background from you on why they haven't done it and what your plan is to ensure that this prime achieves their MBE commitments to the State.

MS. TRAN: Yeah, thanks for the question. I believe that they are a little bit behind on the reporting because the prime contractor is actually a veteran-owned business. And they have been providing a lot of training. So we have different kinds of trainings under this contract. And so far, the trainings that we have tapped into are the types of training that didn't require their MBE sub to step in. But we have scheduled additional trainings now, where they will be using their MBEs more going forward.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: So you feel confident that they will hit the 15 percent both on -- for the total accumulated dollar figure, both for what they had already been allocated and for the 1.9 million we are now approving in addition?

MS. TRAN: Yeah, that's what we're shooting for.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Okay. Can you just follow up with us at some point to get us the numbers and where they are, so that we can understand how MBE compliance is going with this?

MS. TRAN: Yeah, we will do that.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Great. Thank you.

MS. TRAN: Thank you.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Great, that's it for me.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Thanks.

TREASURER DAVIS: If I can? I think it's 13-CGL, the Friends of the Easton Volunteer Fire Department. I know -- I believe that they're here today with former delegate, former secretary Jeannie Haddaway. So I was just wondering if they could stand up or wave or something, just so we can acknowledge them. I appreciate you being here today.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Yeah, thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We'll see you out there.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Yeah, I'm excited. Thank you.

Congrats.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible), thank you.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Thank you.

TREASURER DAVIS: That was it. Thanks for coming out. And I see my former colleague, Majority Whip from the House of Delegate, Talmadge Branch, is here as well.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Oh, yeah, nice.

TREASURER DAVIS: I want to say hello to Talmadge.

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: It's a good way to spend a rainy Wednesday morning. Am I right?

(Laughter.)

TREASURER DAVIS: Thank you.

GOVERNOR MOORE: So if there's no further questions or discussion, Mr. Secretary, we'll pull out Item 56 and conduct a separate vote on that one.

So we'll take Item 56 first. On those items, may I have a motion to



approve?

TREASURER DAVIS: So moved.

GOVERNOR MOORE: All right. I will second it. And the item passes two to one with the Comptroller voting in the negative.

On the remainder of the DGS Agenda sans Item 51, may I have a motion --

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: It's 56.

GOVERNOR MOORE: 56, sorry -- 56. May I have a motion to approve the agenda?

COMPTROLLER LIERMAN: Motion to approve the DGS Agenda.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Is there a second?

TREASURER DAVIS: Second.

GOVERNOR MOORE: Outstanding. Thank you so much. And that concludes today's meeting of the Board of Public Works. Next one is June 11th. I ask that everyone have a wonderful Memorial Day, and to take a moment to remember those who paid the highest price for America. God bless you.

(Whereupon, at 11:00 a.m., the meeting was concluded.)