

News Release

Board of Public Works Approves \$1.5 Billion for Projects Across Maryland

Comptroller praises state's quick response on Key Bridge collapse

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (August 8, 2024) — Comptroller Brooke E. Lierman joined Gov. **Wes Moore** and **Treasurer Dereck Davis** at Wednesday's Board of Public Works (BPW) meeting to approve more than \$1.5 billion for 100 initiatives and projects throughout Maryland.

Governor Moore began the meeting by acknowledging the efforts of the Department of Labor to assist the Key Bridge collapse victims and their families, as well as Port of Baltimore workers in the aftermath of the collapse on March 26. Since April, the Worker Support Program has provided \$16 million to 3,300 workers impacted by the port's closure and 1,191 claims processed during regular unemployment insurance, totaling \$3.3 million.

To quickly distribute funds from the PORT Act to impacted workers, the state utilized an already existing contract. Department of Labor Deputy Secretary Jason Perkins-Cohen said 38,000 individual checks were issued, and the program assisted port workers and their families within 24 days. Secretary Perkins-Cohen thanked the Office of the Comptroller and the Treasurer's Office for their behind-the-scenes efforts to identify impacted employers and workers quickly and for getting money into the hands of people impacted by the tragedy.

While supportive of the state's recovery efforts, Comptroller Lierman joined Treasurer Davis in expressing concerns about the emergency procurement modification used for the Worker Support Program.

"I appreciate the challenging situation that the department found itself in and would just ask in the future that we make sure that we're crossing the T's and dotting the I's with the (Maryland) Attorney General before doing this type of substitution," Comptroller Lierman said. Comptroller Lierman also echoed the governor and treasurer's comments

on how the state's response to the bridge collapse, and the work of her agency to process approximately 40,000 payments valued around \$55 million through port support programs.

"It was a real case study in how government can work well for people and seeing all of the different agencies work together was really inspiring," Comptroller Lierman added. "On our end, we had team members pulled from other 9 to 5 work they need to do to step up as well to do this work."

On a Department of Budget and Management (DBM) award, the board approved a three-year contract of \$1,303,098,566 with the MedImpact Healthcare System for eligible state employees and retirees' health and welfare benefits program via the Pharmacy Benefits Management Services. For the first time, DBM used a reverse auction process established by the legislature with the 2020 Maryland Competitive Pharmacy Benefit Manager Marketplace Act to make the award. The board also approved \$8,430,000 for the Medicare Prescription Drug Exchange and HRA services for Maryland Medicare Retirees.

Comptroller Lierman noted that the reverse auction process has yielded major savings in other states, but only two vendors took part in Maryland's first-time reverse auction bidding. The other bidder was Caremark, the state's current pharmacy benefits manager.

"I hope over the next three years the initial award from DGS and DBM can work together to encourage more competition to smooth out the process to create more savings in the next round of bidding. I think it is also worth saying we are all on the prescription drug plan, like any people in this room, including me. And we defer to the agencies to dig into the details of what is going to be offered at Med Impact versus CVS Caremark, whether it is an app to get your refills and prior authorizations. There's a lot of work to be done to tell state workers over the next few months. This is a big change."

In all, the BPW approved 100 items, representing a total State expenditure of \$1,529,390,447. A comprehensive list of items approved are as follows:

- Approved grant agreements for 21 recipients for 24 projects located in 6 counties and Baltimore City with a total value of \$12,949,175.
- 11 items awarding \$10,958,279.20 to prime certified small business primes.
- 5 items awarding \$3,710,752 to certified minority business enterprise primes.
- 0 items awarding \$0 to Employment Works Program providers.

- 7 items awarded with established participation goals for minority business enterprises.
- 2 items awarded with established participation goals for veteran-owned small business enterprises.

The next meeting of the Board of Public Works is August 28.

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