

Needed Transparency in Quasi-Governmental Bodies



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Maryland's MDDC members

- Cover all areas of the state, from small towns to large cities
- Use many channels to reach citizens: print, online, video, live events, social media.

Regardless of format, your local news comes from our members.

- **85 news organizations**, and 35 ownership groups
- Reach nearly 3 million Marylanders in print; 5.5 million unique visits monthly
- Provide **credible, fact-based news journalism** in formats needed by citizens. Professional standards create credibility. Newspapers and their platforms are trusted by readers.
- Fulfill the **traditional watchdog function**; synthesize and contextualize current events for communities.
- **Hub of community & civics**: outreach, education, advertising



Maryland's MDDC members

Our members provide critical local coverage of government, community institutions, businesses and social events that cannot be replicated.

Journalists are local and most often live in the communities they cover.



Trust and accountability

Maryland's laws create the framework of transparency

Independent of government

Records and actions memorialized and archived

Available to all

Context of information the public needs



Transparency in civic life

- Public Information Act
 - Office of Ombudsman; PIA Compliance Board
 - Some agencies wait out the period; inconsistent application of standards
 - Document management; attorney review multiple times for same document
 - Enforcement relies on courts
 - Overused deliberative and investigatory exemptions
- Open Meetings Act
 - Conscientious Compliance Board
 - Stronger enforcement; seems optional to some
- Public notice statutes
 - Active notice provided to public about government actions affecting them



Transparency needs for quasi-public bodies

Clear

- Some organizations seem to think it optional to follow PIA, Open Meetings
- Agencies such as UMMS have significant amount of state funds and appointed board members

Consistent

- Uniformity across the state and local level in applying standards
- Some agencies are helpful; others shield information; Ombuds report of 2019 (<https://news.maryland.gov/mpiaombuds/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2019/12/Final-Report-on-the-PIA-12.27.19.pdf>)

Conscientious

- Advance notice of meetings; written agendas posted in advance
- Meetings open to the public / press
- Streamed meetings with videos archived and meeting minutes posted

Transparency matters.

Government records are the primary source for the public to make sense of government actions.

