

MARYLAND PUBLIC INFORMATION ACT (PIA)

The public's right to information about government activities lies at the heart of democracy.

**Metrics Handout
Office of the
Public Access Ombudsman**

Since Inception Report
March 30, 2016—June 30, 2023



**87 Months
Since
Inception**

3011 March 30, 2016

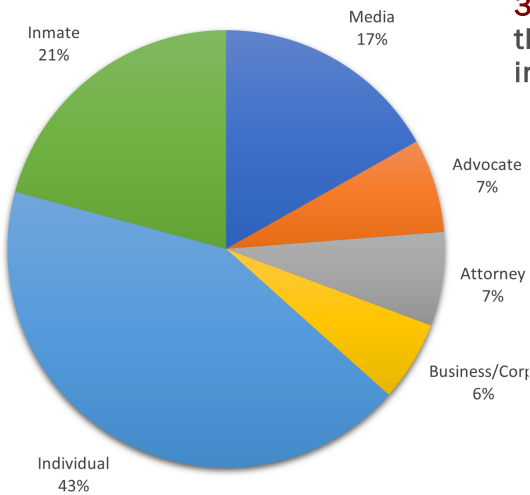
- ♦ 1756 - Mediation requests
- ♦ 1255 - Other / "help-desk" inquiries

The Big Picture: Mediation Matters!

Early resolution of disputes saves time and resources and increases public knowledge and awareness of the PIA process. Mediation is entirely voluntary, confidential, and in many cases doesn't require an attorney.

The Requesters

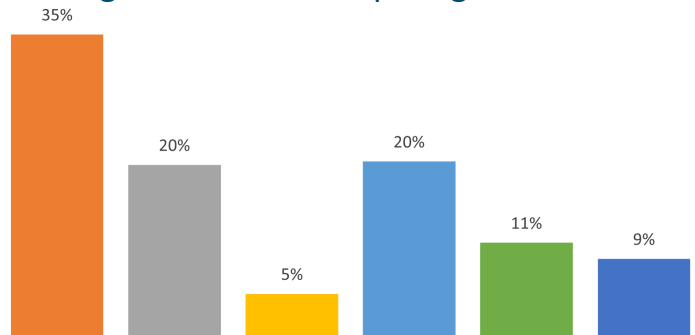
Aggregated Requesters: Professional/Occupational categories make up 36% of requests for assistance and all individuals make up 64%.



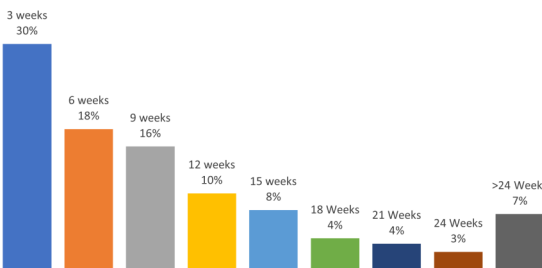
The Agencies

375 unique agencies participated in mediation matters with the PIA Ombudsman since the beginning of the program, including agencies at the state, county and local levels.

What Agencies are Participating in Mediation?

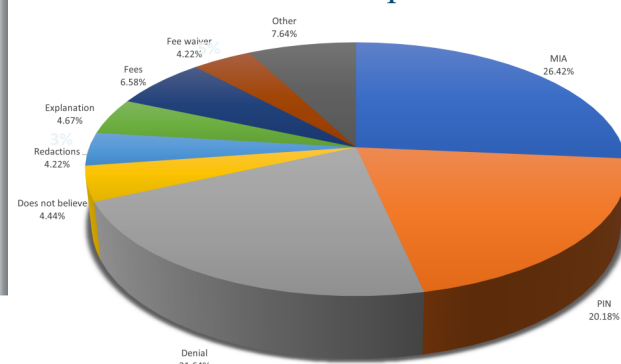


How Long Does Mediation Take?



30% of Ombudsman matters are closed within 3 weeks and 76% by 90 days.

What are the PIA disputes?



Disputes are presented as framed by the requester. Characterizations are based on how the requesters describe the issues. These are not findings.

- Misapplication of exemption 26%
- Redaction inappropriate 4%
- Entire record withheld 22%
- MIA: No Response 26%
- Partial, nonresponsive, or incomplete response 20%
- Fees excessive 7%
- Fee waiver denied or ignored 4%
- Does not believe response 4%
- Asked for explanation of response 5%
- Other 8%

Mediations March 30, 2016 – June 30, 2023	
New/Incoming Cases between 3/30/16—6/30/23	1756
Closed as of 6/30/23	1703

**MPIA Ombudsman
on Twitter**
@MPIA_Ombuds

2023 Legislative Session

[HB 636 \(Inspection of E-Mail Addresses and Telephone Numbers\)](#) – this bill changes the definition of “personal information” to include personal email addresses, and requires custodians to deny inspection of personal email addressees and telephone numbers, except under certain circumstances (e.g., where a licensee uses a personal email address as his or her business address for purposes related to the license). Effective Oct. 1, 2023

[HB 1051 \(Decisions of the State Public Information Act Compliance Board – Appeals\)](#) – this bill specifies that a party aggrieved by the decision of a circuit court reviewing a Board decision may appeal to the Appellate Court of Maryland (formerly known as the Court of Special Appeals); the bill was amended during session to also clarify that an applicant (in addition to a custodian or complainant) has the right to appeal an adverse Board decision (this would come into play when a custodian files a complaint alleging that a request is frivolous, vexatious, or in bad faith). Effective Oct. 1, 2023

[Click here to see all bills tagged “Public Information” in the 2023 Session](#)

RESOURCES/LINKS

ALL TITLES BELOW ARE HYPERLINKED

- ◆ [Public Access Ombudsman’s Website \(request mediation\)](#)
- ◆ Public Access Ombudsman’s Interpretive Regulations
- ◆ [PIA Manual](#) – 17th Edition, July 2022
- ◆ [Maryland State Archives](#) – a resource for custodian record management and retention practices
- ◆ [Office of Government Information Services \(OGIS-FOIA\)](#)

Outreach FY 2023

July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

Presentations, Workshops, Trainings, and Other Outreach

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Public Access Ombudsman’s Office conducted all trainings and presentations by remote means.

- St. Mary’s County Government, *MPIA: A Comprehensive Overview*, July 21, 2022
- Maryland Association of County’s Summer Conference, *MPIA: A Comprehensive Overview*, August 20, 2022, a presentation in partnership with Judge David Carey.
- Local Government Insurance Trust, *MPIA: A Comprehensive Overview* – November 3, 2022
- Brown Bag Series #1 – *MPIA: A Comprehensive Overview* – November 16, 2022
- Frederick County Law Enforcement, *MPIA: A Comprehensive Overview* – December 14, 2022
- House Health & Government Operations Committee, *Briefing: Ombudsman’s Program* – January 19, 2023
- Marylander’s for Open Government Transparency Summit – January 20, 2023
- Baltimore County Public Library, *MPIA: A Comprehensive Overview* – February 6, 2023
- Sunshine Week (invited by Common Cause Maryland), *MPIA: A Comprehensive Overview* – March 16, 2023
- Brown Bag Series #2 – Deliberative Process Privilege & Discretionary Exemptions – April 20, 2023
- Office of Health Care Quality, *MPIA: A Comprehensive Overview* – May 2, 2023
- Maryland Municipal League Summer Conference, *MPIA: A Comprehensive Overview* – June 26, 2023

Select Publications

Publications since inception can be found on the Ombudsman’s Website at <https://news.maryland.gov/mpiaombuds/paoresources/>.

- **Ombudsman’s FY 2022 Annual Report**, included as an Appendix to the 2022 Annual Report of the PIA Compliance Board. September 2022
- **Testimony of the Ombudsman** submitted to the House HGO and Senate EHEA Committees concerning HB 183/SB 449. February 2021
- **Final Report on the Public Information Act**. Submitted by the PIA Compliance Board and the Public Access Ombudsman and pursuant to Committee Narrative in the Report on the Fiscal 2020 State Operating Budget and the State Capital Budget. December 27, 2019
- **HB 1105 Report**: Ombudsman’s Report Concerning the Howard County Public School System’s Handling of Requests Under the Public Information Act. December 30, 2016
- **What’s New?** A comparison of the process for PIA dispute resolution before and after July 1, 2022.
- **Mediation Process Flow-Chart**

