

LAWRENCE J. HOGAN, JR.
Governor

BOYD K. RUTHERFORD
Lt. Governor



LISA A. KERSHNER
Public Access Ombudsman

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE
PUBLIC ACCESS OMBUDSMAN

Notice Concerning Ombudsman Operations Due to COVID-19 Virus

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On March 13, Governor Hogan issued a directive that requires all nonessential state employees to telework (i.e., to work remotely) as part of the statewide effort to contain or mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Thus, the Office of the Public Access Ombudsman is working entirely remotely.

Presently, all of us in the Ombudsman's Office are attempting to conduct as much of our regular work as possible remotely and are in the process of working through a number of issues that impact that effort. For example, at the present time and for the foreseeable future, our ability to receive regular mail sent to us at 200 St. Paul Place in Baltimore, at best, is limited and unpredictable. Thus, if you send us a letter by regular mail, you can expect substantial delays in our ability to answer your correspondence.

Electronic Communication, or Email, is currently the best means to reach the Ombudsman's Office.

- If you do not have access to email, but are able to designate someone else who does have email access as someone we can communicate with about your PIA matter, then we will be happy to work with that designated person **provided you first give us express written permission** to discuss your matter with that person.
- You can give us written permission by **completing the enclosed permission form, *Designated Representative Permission Form***, signing and dating it, and then mailing to your designee so that he/she can provide it to us. If/when we receive this *Designated Representative Permission Form*, completed and signed by you, we will then be able to discuss your PIA matter with the designated person you name in that form. **Written Permission must be granted and received by us before we can communicate with the other person about your PIA matter.**
- If you are able to designate someone who can communicate with us on your behalf, the easiest way for that person to reach us will be by email to pia.ombuds@oag.state.md.us.

Required. Without written permission from you authorizing us to discuss your PIA matter with the person you designate, we will be unable to communicate any information about your matter to that person.

If you are not able to designate someone with access to email as a person with whom we can communicate about your PIA matter, we will continue to do our best to respond to letters you send to our office by regular mail. Please be aware that there may be substantial delays beyond our control in responding to your correspondence.