

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—March 31, 2020*



**48 Months
 Since
 Inception**

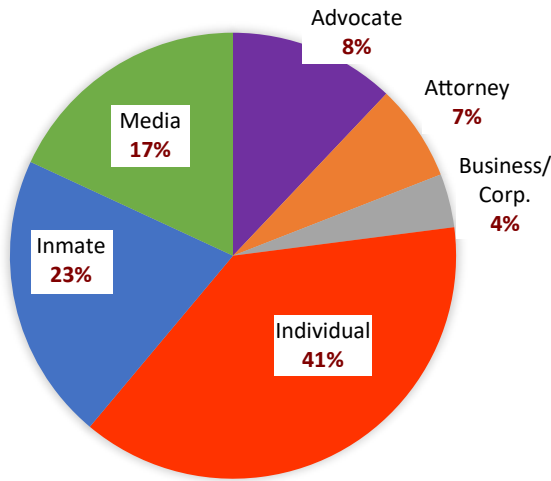
1530 *since March 30, 2016*

- ◆ 967 - Mediation requests
- ◆ 563+ - Other / "help-desk" inquiries

The Big Picture: Mediation Matters!

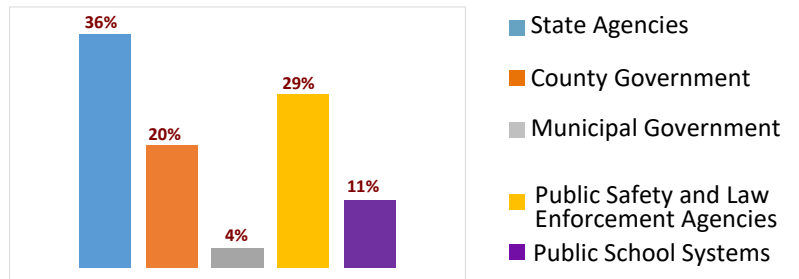
Early resolution of disputes saves time and resources and increases public knowledge and awareness of the PIA process. Mediation is entirely voluntary, confidential, and in many cases doesn't require an attorney.

Requestors

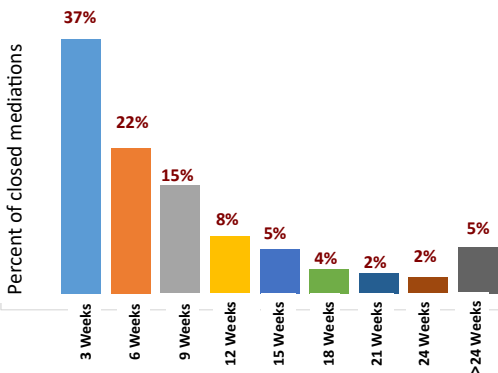


Agencies

257 unique agencies participated in mediation matters with the PIA Ombudsman since the beginning of the program. Agency jurisdictions are state, county and local level.



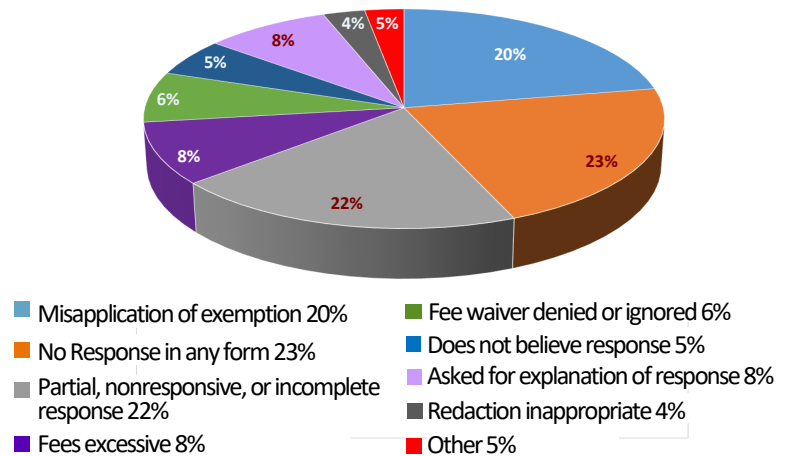
Length of Time to Close



37% of Ombudsman matters are resolved within 3 weeks and **59%** by 6 weeks.

PIA Disputes

As described by the requestor.



Mediations	
New/Incoming cases between 3/30/16—3/31/20	967
Closed as of 3/31/20	905

**Lisa
 Kershner**

200 St. Paul Place,
 25th Floor
 Baltimore, MD 21202

Phone: 410-576-6560
 Email: pia.ombuds@oag.state.md.us
 Twitter: @MPIA_Ombuds

Ombudsman's Website:
<http://piaombuds.maryland.gov>

2020 Legislative Session

Multiple bills were introduced during the 2020 Legislative session that would have amended the PIA. The session was terminated early due to the COVID-19 State of Emergency and none of the PIA bills passed, including HB 502/SB 590, which was based on the recommendations of the Ombudsman and PIA Compliance Board in their joint *Report on the PIA* published December 27, 2019.

Open Matters: Blog of the Public Access Ombudsman

- **Importance of Accurate PIA Custodian Contact Information.** 04/06/2020
- **Guidance to Governmental Custodians Regarding PIA Timelines during the COVID-19 Crisis.** 03/23/2020
- **Ombudsman and members of the PIA Compliance Board unanimously support HB 502 / SB 590.** 02/14/2020
- **Records Management and the Public Information Act.** 01/07/2020
- **Highlights From The PIA Compliance Board's Opinions.** 8/14/19
- **Ombudsman and PIACB Seeking Comments on Research Project.** 8/1/19
- **Where Are My Records?** 7/12/19
- **Assessing Fees for PIA Requests,** 7/03/19

Outreach 2020 & 2019

Presentations, Workshops, Trainings, and Other Outreach

2020

Due to the COVID-19 State of Emergency, the Public Access Ombudsman's Office was required to postpone three in-person trainings scheduled in the first quarter of 2020. The Ombudsman's Office plans to create virtual /online training modules on the PIA for future use.

2019

- PIA Compliance Board, Discussion of PIA Research Report, December 17
- PIA Compliance Board, Discussion of Preliminary Findings for PIA Research Report, November 5
- Maryland Association of Counties, County Attorneys, November 13
- Maryland Association of Counties, Winter Conference, November 20
- Wicomico County Public Schools, October 17
- Maryland State Bar Association, October 25
- Local Government Insurance Trust, October 31
- Veterans of Jessup Correctional Institution, September 25
- Maryland Municipal Clerks Association, September 19
- Open Government Advocacy Network meeting hosted by the ACLU, September 19
- PIACB Annual Meeting Presentation on PIA Research Report, August 19
- Maryland Association of Counties, Summer Conference, August 14
- Veterans of Jessup Correctional Institution, July 10
- Bowie Police Department, June 11
- Harford Co. State's Attorney's Office, June 7

Select Publications

- **Final Report on the Public Information Act.** Submitted by the PIA Compliance Board and the Public Access Ombudsman pursuant to Committee Narrative in the Report on the Fiscal 2020 State Operating Budget and the State Capital Budget. December 27, 2019
- **Report on the Public Information Act: Preliminary Findings and Recommendations.** Submitted by the PIA Compliance Board and the Public Access Ombudsman. November 6, 2019
- **Where Are My Records?** Office of the Public Defender, Post Conviction Newsletter, Summer 2019
- **Public Access Ombudsman's Interpretive Regulations:** <https://tinyurl.com/y2cuqp55>, June 2019
- **Ombudsman comments, included as an Appendix to the 2019 Annual Report of the PIA Compliance Board.** September 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

RESOURCES/LINKS

- ◆ **Public Access Ombudsman:** www.piaombuds.maryland.gov
- ◆ **MD Office of the Attorney General—PIA Manual** www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/OpenGov/piamanual.aspx (includes Appendix J: List of Public Record Custodians)
- ◆ **MD State Archives:** a resource for record management and retention practices. www.msa.maryland.gov
- ◆ **Office of Government Information Services:** www.archives.gov/ogis
- ◆ **Federal FOIA (Freedom of Information Act):** www.foia.gov
- ◆ **DC Office of Open Government:** www.open-dc.gov/office-open-government

**MPIA Ombudsman
on Twitter
@MPIA_Ombuds**

