improvements," and the proposed FY2026 allowance for MD-THINK is **$157.6 million**, which accounts for 46% of the entire DHS Administration budget. A key driver for this increase is "rising Amazon Web Services (AWS) cloud service costs," suggesting a lack of effective cloud financial management (FinOps) or a suboptimal system architecture.

1.2 Governance and Oversight Failures

A formal governance structure, the **MD THINK Committee**, was established in 2021 to set policy and priorities for the platform. This cabinet-level body, supported by an Executive Director, is responsible for the platform's strategic direction and data governance.
Despite this structure, execution has failed. A forensic audit identified "numerous deficiencies regarding DHS' oversight and monitoring of the project." A legislative analysis further noted that the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) was "unable to sufficiently explain or justify" the cost overruns and delays. This points to a significant disconnect between the formal governance body and the operational and fiscal management of the project, rendering executive oversight ineffective.

2.0 Technical Architecture and Components

MD-THINK is built on a modern, cloud-native technology stack designed for scalability and integration. The architecture was intended to be a "complete re-architecting" of legacy systems, not a simple "lift and shift" migration.

- **Core Principles:** The system is founded on a **microservices architecture** hosted on **AWS**, designed to break down monolithic applications into smaller, independently deployable services. This is coupled with a **Shared Data Repository** and an **API-driven integration layer** to facilitate data sharing and a "plug and play" approach for agency applications.
- **Cloud and Hosting (AWS):** The platform utilizes a broad array of AWS services, including **Amazon EC2** for compute, **Amazon ECS** for container orchestration, and **Amazon RDS** for managed databases. Development follows Agile (SAFe) and DevOps methodologies with CI/CD pipelines for automated deployment.
- **Data Management: Informatica** is the core third-party technology for Master Data Management (MDM), Data Integration, and Data Quality, consolidating data from various programs into the shared repository. The system also includes a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database to track user inquiries.
- **Application & Frontend:** The public-facing portal (MarylandBenefits.gov, formerly myMDTHINK) is built using **JavaServer Faces (JSF)**. User identity and access management is handled by **SailPoint IdentityIQ**, which manages login, security policies, and One-Time Passcode (OTP) authentication.
- **Security and Compliance:** The platform is designed for compliance with federal standards like HIPAA, FISMA, and NIST. Specialized contractors were engaged to provide endpoint security, vulnerability scanning, and guidance based on principles like Zero Trust Architecture.

3.0 Performance and User Experience

Publicly available data on the platform's performance and user satisfaction is critically lacking, but the information that does exist points to significant issues.

- **Performance Metrics:** There are no publicly available, state-validated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for system uptime, transaction speed, or user load. This makes it impossible to independently verify vendor claims of "Enhanced Scalability and Performance." A single public webpage test of the myMDTHINK portal revealed a very slow Largest Contentful Paint (LCP) of 11.231 seconds, indicating a poor user experience.
- **User Satisfaction:** The most recent quantitative metric is a 66% overall satisfaction (CSAT) score from a 2021 DHS report, a figure that is both dated and mediocre. Qualitative data is conflicting. While a 2022 pilot program report was positive, a vendor case study acknowledged that its work was needed to address "low user satisfaction" and a lack of accessibility compliance in the legacy system. The forensic audit's finding of "issues with the overall functionality" strongly suggests significant, unresolved user-facing problems.
- **User Support:** No public data exists on help desk ticket volume or common issues. The primary complaint process is for discrimination issues, not system usability problems.

4.0 Gap Analysis: Promised Vision vs. Documented Reality

This analysis compares the intended state of the MD-THINK ecosystem with its current, documented condition, highlighting critical gaps in technical and data infrastructure.

4.1 MD-THINK Platform

Aspect	Promised/Designed State	Current/Documented Reality	**Identified Gap**
Fiscal Management	A cost-effective, cloud-based platform leveraging "pay as you go" infrastructure.	Costs have escalated from $166.4M to over $618M. Ongoing O&M costs are fiscally unsustainable, with rising AWS costs cited as a key driver.	**Massive Governance and FinOps Failure.** The project lacks effective cost control and financial oversight. Rising AWS costs contradict the "pay as you go" efficiency promise, indicating potential architectural flaws or poor financial management.
Core Functionality	A modern, stable platform that revolutionizes service delivery.	A forensic audit found the project was "not developed effectively, leading to issues with the overall functionality and the need for ongoing re-work."	**Fundamental Implementation Failure.** The platform is technically unstable and does not deliver the core functionality required, necessitating continuous, costly rework.
Data Integration & APIs	A shared data repository with a "plug	No public API catalog exists. API endpoints	**API Ecosystem Failure.** The lack of a

Aspect	Promised/Designed State	Current/Documented Reality	**Identified Gap**
	and play" API architecture to break down agency silos and enable a 360-degree client view.	are discoverable but undocumented, severely hindering adoption by partner agencies (MDH, DOL, etc.). The goal of inter-agency data sharing is not being realized.	documented, governed API catalog makes the "plug and play" vision impossible. The platform risks becoming another expensive data silo, defeating its primary purpose.
Governance	A cabinet-level committee sets policy and provides strategic oversight.	The committee structure has been ineffective. A forensic audit found "numerous deficiencies" in oversight, and DoIT could not justify the project's cost or delays.	**Ineffective Governance Model.** The formal governance structure has failed to control scope, cost, or quality, indicating a disconnect between executive oversight and project execution.

4.2 Eligibility and Enrollment (E&E) System

Aspect	Promised/Designed State	Current/Documented Reality	**Identified Gap**
Functionality	A seamless, efficient module for determining and enrolling citizens in benefits programs.	The E&E component faced significant challenges during field testing, requiring redesigns and contributing directly to project delays and cost increases.	**Functionality and Design Gap.** The E&E module was not designed or developed effectively from the start, serving as a major source of the project's overall failure and cost escalation.
Integration	A core, integrated module within the MD-THINK platform.	While part of the platform, its functionality gaps and redesigns have been a primary driver of integration challenges and delays for other system components, such as the Child Support Management System.	**Integration Bottleneck.** The failures within the E&E module have had a cascading negative effect on the integration and rollout of other critical human services applications.

4.3 Maryland Benefits Portal (formerly myMDTHINK)

Aspect	Promised/Designed State	Current/Documented Reality	**Identified Gap**
User Experience	A user-friendly, single portal for citizens to access all services.	The legacy portal suffered from "low user satisfaction." The current portal has demonstrated extremely slow page load times in testing, and the most recent CSAT score was a poor 66%.	**Poor User Experience.** The portal fails to provide a modern, performant, and satisfying user experience, creating barriers for citizens seeking essential services.
Accessibility	An accessible platform for all users, including those with disabilities.	The legacy system was not compliant with WCAG 2.1 accessibility standards. While a redesign aimed to fix this, the lack of current, independent accessibility audits means compliance is unverified.	**Unverified Accessibility.** A critical failure in the original system was its lack of accessibility. There is no public data to confirm the current portal meets WCAG 2.1 standards, representing a potential ongoing service delivery failure.
Technology	A modern, mobile-friendly web application.	The portal is built on JavaServer Faces (JSF), an older and less common framework for modern web applications, which may contribute to performance issues and hiring challenges.	**Outdated Frontend Technology.** The choice of JSF over more modern frameworks (like React or Angular, which are common in state developer job postings) is a potential technical gap that could impact performance and maintainability.

4.4 Maryland Benefits One Application

Aspect	Promised/Designed State	Current/Documented Reality	**Identified Gap**
Functionality	A streamlined feature allowing users to apply for multiple benefits (SNAP, WIC, Medical Assistance) in a single process.	The feature has been launched on the MarylandBenefits.gov portal.	**Data and Performance Gap.** As a new feature, there is no public data on its performance, user satisfaction, or whether it successfully integrates data on the

Aspect	Promised/Designed State	Current/Documented Reality	**Identified Gap**
			backend without errors. Given the platform's history of functionality issues, the effectiveness of this new feature is a significant unknown.
Data Integrity	Data from a single application is correctly parsed and routed to the appropriate backend systems for each distinct benefit program.	The underlying data infrastructure has been plagued by issues, as noted in the forensic audit.	**High Risk to Data Integrity.** The "One Application" feature depends on a stable and reliable data integration layer. Given the documented problems with the core platform, there is a high risk of data errors, application processing failures, and a poor user experience, undermining the feature's goal of simplification.