



Maryland Association of the Deaf
Written Testimony
HB 98 – Co-Navigation Services Program
Tuesday, January 31, 2024

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The Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD) is a statewide organization that protects the interests of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Marylanders concerning accessibility and equity issues. We are advocating for the passage of HB 98 sponsored by Delegate Kaufman regarding the DeafBlind Co-Navigation Services Program. There are approximately 1.2 million Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals living in the State of Maryland.

There are around 32,000 DeafBlind people living in the State of Maryland who want to live independently and safely. MDAD heard stories from individuals where their life was jeopardized when they were doing errands on their own. A Co-Navigator will provide them visual and environmental information since they cannot see and cannot hear. They need a specific person who knows how to communicate with them. Many people gave up their time and volunteered their time to support the DeafBlind Community. DeafBlind people experience challenges to ask people to support them in many ways. It is now time to recognize the needs of theirs and get people paid for the task.

Without a Co-Navigator, a DeafBlind person could be killed by the train or bus or car when they walk across the rail or street. Without one, a DeafBind person could be given the wrong medication by the pharmacy which could harm their life. Now it is the time for the State to recognize DeafBlind people’s needs and we look forward to seeing the State of Maryland to be the first state to pass this kind of law.

We look forward to a favorable bill on HB 98.

Thank you,

MDAD Board of Directors