



Maryland Association of the Deaf
Written Testimony
SB 689 - Fire Protection and Prevention - Sprinkler Systems and Smoke
Alarms - Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)
Friday, March 1, 2024
Position: Favorable

President
Tina Joyner

The Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD) is a statewide organization that protects the interests of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Marylanders regarding accessibility and equality issues.

Vice President
Jacob Leffler

MDAD supports the bill, SB 689, that is sponsored by Senator Smith. There are approximately 1.2 million Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals living in the State of Maryland. We have heard many stories where the landlord would not purchase or obtain a smoke detector/fire alarm for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing tenants. Some landlords would make the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing tenant pay for it and are not reimbursed.

Secretary
Tiasha Bera

Most recently, a Deaf woman who lived in the apartment building for several years in Silver Spring. The building was on fire in February 2023. She has asked her landlord several times for the fire alarm or smoke detector and her landlord refuses. She was lucky enough to have someone go into her room and wake her up to get out of the building as soon as possible. In our view, this violates her right to have reasonable accommodation and feeling safe at her own home.

Treasurer
Allysa Dittmar

Landlords need to be responsible for their buildings and units. They are the one who decides to allow a person to live in their home. If there is an issue with their home, the tenant must contact the landlord and the landlord will need to solve the issue. It is the same conception and responsibility with the smoke detector and fire alarm for a Deaf tenant. The landlords are responsible to make sure that all the tenants are in safe space with all the necessary devices.

Board Members
Vikki Porter
Jennifer Ajifowoke
Blaise Delahoussaye
Tori Reeves
Thelma Schroeder

For the sake of safety and peace of mind on Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing tenants, MDAD requests the favorable report of the bill, SB 689. This will make sure that landlords are responsible to provide the smoke detector or fire alarm according to the American with Disabilities Act.

MDAD Board of Directors