

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAV_SB1084.pdf

Uploaded by: Diane Arias

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 4, 2024

Senate Bill 1084

**State Government – Commission for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 1084 establishes the Commission for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing as an independent unit of State government to provide and advocate for accessible and comprehensive services, and foster inclusivity, equal opportunities, and improved quality of life, for individuals who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing.

This commission plays a crucial role in advancing advocacy efforts for individuals who are deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing. Its primary objective is to champion policies, programs, and initiatives addressing the specific needs of this community within Maryland. Through an external review, the commission will aim to identify and rectify any existing gaps in services. Additionally, the commission will actively work to reduce barriers faced by deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals across the state, where over 1.2 million residents fall into this demographic.¹

Recognizing the inherent value of each individual and understanding the distinct needs of those with visual and auditory impairments are essential elements for ensuring the protection and well-being of this marginalized community. The commission brings together a vast network of professionals with firsthand experiences and the necessary knowledge to provide valuable recommendations. These recommendations will contribute to ongoing efforts aimed at enhancing the quality of life for individuals with visual and auditory impairments.

¹ <https://www.dcnnewsnow.com/news/local-news/maryland/frederick-county-md/maryland-deaf-community-center-set-to-come-to-frederick/>

The MCC supports initiatives that enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities, firmly believing that this commission will significantly contribute to achieving greater equity for this underserved population.

For these reasons, the MCC asks for a favorable report on **SB 1084**.

Thank you for your consideration.

2024 MOTA SB 1084 House Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Paddy

Position: FAV



Maryland Occupational Therapy Association

PO Box 36401, Towson, Maryland 21286 ♦ www.mota-members.com

Committee:	Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Bill Number:	Senate Bill 1084 - State Government - Commission for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing
Hearing Date:	March 1, 2024
Position:	Support

The Maryland Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA) supports Senate Bill 1084 - State Government - Commission for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing. The bill establishes the Commission for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing to provide and advocate for accessible and comprehensive services, and foster inclusivity, equal opportunities, and improved quality of life, for individuals who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing.

Occupational therapists support the establishment of a Commission for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing due to their expertise in promoting independence and participation in daily activities for individuals with disabilities. This specialized group of individuals faces unique challenges in communication, social interaction, and access to information and services. The Commission would be specifically dedicated to their needs, occupational therapists aim to ensure that the rights and well-being of the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing population are protected and that their specific needs are addressed in policies and programs. Through collaboration with other professionals and stakeholders, occupational therapists can contribute their knowledge and skills to develop inclusive strategies and promote equal opportunities for this group.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any additional information, please feel free to contact Michael Paddy at mpaddy@policypartners.net.

DawnPadonTestimonySB1084.pdf

Uploaded by: Dawn Padon

Position: FWA

Dear honorable members of the committee:

I am writing this to fully support the establishment of the Commission of the Deaf, Deaf Blind, and Hard of Hearing (SB 1084). To focus on improving case management services but especially for the Deaf Blind people; State of Maryland needs to be able to provide those people with full support.

Here's my story; My boyfriend was deaf/blind, we were together for 16 years. We have one daughter who is 16 years old but he had to leave us a few years ago because the state of Maryland couldn't provide the best service for him or any Deaf Blind people.

When he came to Maryland, he was able to see pretty well. We enjoyed our activities together but after our daughter was born, his sight declined and become blind. He was left without any knowledge related to blind, he felt very rejected and frustrated without any excellent training. I helped lead him to work with DORS. DORS made the referral with the CLB known as Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind and TCS. To get their services took forever to get in because of funding and lack of staff supporting to train the clients who are Deaf/Blind and their service with the SSP as Support Service Provider to assist with transportation is very limited per month. It was supposed to start in a few weeks but exaggerated to months and years.

They provided a very limited number of days to train such as mobility, learning to use the braille, transport to and from and more caused him plenty of frustration and depression since the state of Maryland does not have Deaf/Blind Residential Program that can provide housing, ongoing training, assist with finding the job, full service with transportation assistance. At that time, my relationship with my boyfriend was difficult because they couldn't provide what he needs and I had to provide him with a lot of assistant by helping him find a job twice, set up the interview with interpreters, explore for some additional training which putting me in great deal of stress of role as a person to him. I felt like I was his SSP instead of his girlfriend, even to support his emotions when he became frustrated with often being canceled with the training or transportation which led him to experience depression.

Because of the lack of services that can be provided for him, he had no choice but to leave and reside in Louisiana where they DO have full service to provide everything that Deaf/Blind needs. He is now happy where he is. He not only lost the relationship with me but, also more importantly, to our daughter, who he has missed seeing her growing up. As of now, he averages seeing her once a year for up to a week... or two if we are lucky.

It is definitely needed for the State of Maryland to acknowledge and take full responsibility to support people with disabilities, but especially the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals, as we have particular communication needs and issues. The Commission would be able to set up programs, provide direct case management services, and also develop bills that would help improve lives to put on the table for the legislation.

Thank you for your attention and please consider supporting this bill to establish the Commission to be successful.

Dawn Padon

Commission Bill - SB 1084 - March 4, 2024.pdf

Uploaded by: MDAD President MDAD President

Position: FWA

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

We are writing on behalf of Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD) and with support from all the organizations that serve communities in the State of Maryland. We are asking you to support SB 1084 - Commission for the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing, sponsored by Senator Mary Washington. This bill will require establishing the Commission as an independent unit of State to provide and advocate for accessible and comprehensive services, and foster inclusivity, equal opportunities, and improved quality of life, for individuals who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing; and generally relating to the Commission for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing. This commission will fill in the service gaps the community needs that the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing cannot provide due to their limited resources.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter and we appreciate your support on SB 1084.

Sincerely,

Tina Joyner
President
Maryland Association of the Deaf

Janet S. Weinstock
President
Maryland Deaf Senior Citizens, Inc.

Linda Stoltz
President
Maryland Deaf Community Center

Jacob Leffler
President
Baltimore City Association of the Deaf

Bruce Denhart
Acting President
Metro Washington Association of the
DeafBlind

Jeffrey Buxbaum,
President
Washington Society of Jewish Deaf

Sophia Hu
President
Greater Washington Asian Deaf
Association

Gabrielle Davis
President
Prince George's County Association of
the Deaf

Elke Pieters
President
Howard County Association of the Deaf

Apurva Varia
President
Metro South Asian Deaf Association

MDAD SB 1084 Written Testimony Commission.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: MDAD President MDAD President

Position: FWA



Maryland Association of the Deaf
Written Testimony
SB 1084 – Commission on Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing
Monday, March 4, 2024

President

Tina Joyner

As you may be aware, there are approximately 1.2 million Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing (D/DB/HH) individuals living in the State of Maryland. The Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD) is a statewide organization that protects and promotes the interests of accessibility, equity, and quality of life for those D/DB/HH Marylanders.

Vice President

Jacob Leffler

While commissions in other states are able to recognize service gaps and provide direct case management for these communities, the same cannot be said of Maryland. Currently, there is no centralized place that provides case management services statewide while identifying, understanding, and supporting the needs of D/DB/HH communities. MDAD has heard stories too numerous to count of Marylanders seeking services only to encounter a patchwork of resources and/or agencies that do not sufficiently address their issues. Many of these individuals fall through the cracks.

Secretary

Tiasha Bera

Treasurer

Allysa Dittmar

To that end, MDAD believes that the establishment of the Commission on Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing would be a good step in the right direction concerning the above-mentioned issues impacting the D/DB/HH communities. The passage of this bill—SB 1084, sponsored by Senator Washington—would empower the Commission to operate as an independent organization of the State of Maryland to provide and advocate for accessible and comprehensive services, improve equitable opportunities, and encourage inclusivity for D/DB/HH constituents in Maryland.

Board Members

Vikki Porter

Jennifer Ajifowoke

Blaise Delahoussaye

Tori Reeves

Thelma Schroeder

The bill would allow the Commission to establish programs that are very much needed in the State of Maryland to improve delivery of services and enhance the quality of life for D/DB/HH communities. MDAD continues to respect and support the work of the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GODHH). As a matter of fact, MDAD was involved in the push for the establishment of GODHH over 20 years ago. While establishing GODHH has been proven fruitful, there are limitations to the office due to its very nature of aligning with the current governor's preferences and priorities on issues impacting the D/DB/HH communities. The Commission would independently be able to initiate and advocate for legislation and perform community-based work.

The Commission is not intended to replace GODHH, but rather, fill in advocacy and services gaps that GODHH is not statutorily responsible for. We believe that having both entities would help strengthen the D/DB/HH communities.

MDAD looks forward to favorable with amendments on SB 1084.

Thank you,

MDAD Board of Directors

SB1084 (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Suzanne Duffy

Position: UNF

SB1084 is another **RACIST** bill. Say **NO** to **RACISM**. ED

**To hire someone based on SKIN color, ethnicity or gender is
BIGOTED, RACIST, SEXIST and beyond HYPOCRITICAL.**

Suzanne Price
AACo, MD