



April 2, 2024

**Senate Bill 1084
Workgroup for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing - Established
House Health and Government Operations 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 Workgroup for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing to study and make recommendations regarding certain services, programs, advocacy, outreach efforts, and other items to improve the quality of life of individuals who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing; and requiring the Workgroup to submit a report of its finding and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before June 1, 2025.

This workgroup would play 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 workgroup will aim to identify and rectify any existing gaps in services. Additionally, the workgroup can 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 workgroup 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 workgroup 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.