



Committee on Education, Energy,
and Environment

Subcommittees

Chair, Education

Environment

Joint Committees

Chair, on Administrative, Executive,
and Legislative Review

The Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal
Bays Critical Areas

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB1084: Workgroup for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing - Established

Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and distinguished members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee,

Sb1084 is an identical cross-file of HB1069 from Delegate Kaufman, which passed unanimously out of this committee and out of the House this year.

This bill will create a workgroup to study the creation of a Commission of the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing. **The purpose of a Commission is to be a resource for self-advocacy and community empowerment.**

The workgroup will address issues directly pertinent to service provision and accessibility for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing Communities. Specifically, the workgroup will make recommendations regarding partnerships with the public and private sector, accessibility for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community to improve their quality of life, barriers and gaps in communication access, outreach efforts to raise public awareness, advocacy for policies, programs, and legislative initiatives, the development and administration of programs, and providing direct and specialized case management services.

We have made a series of amendments to the original bill that will allow for best practices to be studied for the Commission before its inception.

These amendments were made with the advocacy groups and the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

The Workgroup will develop a set of recommendations that will become the basis for services and State collaboration for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing communities

The membership of the workgroup:

- One member of the Senate, appointed by the Senate President
- One member of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the House; and

- Ten community representatives of state or local nonprofit organizations for deaf individuals in the state or the DC metropolitan area, appointed by the Governor.
- The Director of the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, or the Director's designee

Also, to the extent practicable, when appointing members to the commission, the Governor shall ensure geographic balance and promote racial and gender diversity in the commission's membership.

This Workgroup will allow us **to serve the specific needs of the over 1.2 million deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing Marylanders.**

I respectfully request a favorable report on SB1084.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mary Washington". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Senator Mary Washington

Maryland 43rd District