

# **MSD Testimony\_SB0339.pdf**

Uploaded by: John Serrano

Position: FAV

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## **Testimony in Support of SB 339**

**BILL NO:** SB 339

**BILL TITLE:** Maryland School for the Deaf - Membership of Board of Trustees – Alterations

**COMMITTEE:** Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**POSITION:** SUPPORT

**HEARING DATE:** February 27, 2026

### **Statement of Purpose**

To Chair Senator Feldman, Vice Chair Senator Kagan and Members of the Committee:

My name is John A. Serrano and I am writing to strongly urge a **favorable report on SB 339**. This legislation, jointly requested by the Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD) and its Board of Trustees, proposes critical updates to the Board's composition to ensure more efficient, accountable, and representative governance.

### **History and Role of the Maryland School for the Deaf**

Since 1868, the Maryland School for the Deaf has provided tuition-free public education to deaf and hard of hearing students from across the state, serving them from birth through age 21. As the only public school in Maryland specializing in this field, MSD operates campuses in Frederick and Columbia to provide a bilingual signing environment where every student has access to language, learning, and community. The school offers a full range of academic programs, extracurriculars, and a residential program for those living beyond commuting distance. To manage this complex institution, the Board of Trustees holds primary governance and fiduciary responsibilities, which include appointing the Superintendent, adopting policies, and overseeing annual operating and capital budgets to safeguard public resources.

### **Strengthening Deaf Leadership**

A primary achievement of this bill is the permanent protection of a Deaf majority in the school's leadership.

- **Current Law:** Requires a board of up to nineteen (19) members, with no fewer than six (6) being Deaf.
- **Proposed Change:** Decreases the maximum size to thirteen (13) members and increases the minimum number of Deaf members to seven (7).
- **Impact:** This ensures the Board will always maintain a Deaf majority, ensuring that governance is guided by leaders with lived cultural and linguistic expertise.

## Modernizing Governance for Efficiency

At nineteen members, the current Board is larger than is typical or necessary for a state the size of Maryland, which can complicate deliberation and diffuse accountability.

- **Alignment with Comparable Bodies:** A 13-member board aligns MSD more closely with the Maryland State Board of Education, which consists of 14 members. Furthermore, a review of Maryland's local public school boards shows a standard range of 5 to 13 members, placing this proposal squarely within established state norms.
- **National Research:** Research into out-of-state programs and schools that function similarly to MSD, operating as independent state agencies with their own governing boards, reveals that such boards typically do not exceed 9 members. Reducing MSD's board to 13 is a significant step toward these leaner, more effective national models.
- **Operational Benefits:** A smaller board can reach quorum more consistently and conduct business in a timely manner, reducing delays in routine governance.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** A reduced size lowers costs associated with full-day meetings, including meals and related expenses, resulting in more responsible use of public resources.

## Conclusion

SB 339 centers the voices of the Deaf community while positioning the school for long-term institutional effectiveness. It is a common-sense modernization that supports the students, staff, and families of the Maryland School for the Deaf.

I respectfully request a **favorable report** on SB 339.

Sincerely,

John A. Serrano,  
Superintendent, MSD

## **Testimony from Senator Lewis Young**

Uploaded by: Senator Lewis Young Senator Lewis Young

Position: FAV



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
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The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair  
The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Maryland Senate  
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 27th, 2026

**SB339 -Maryland School for the Deaf - Membership of Board of Trustees - Alterations**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and esteemed colleagues:

Senate Bill 339 will alter the maximum size of the Board of Trustees for the Maryland School for the Deaf from nineteen to thirteen members. The bill further establishes that, within the restructured board, at least seven members must be deaf, increasing the current minimum of six and enshrining deaf-majority membership. To be clear, no current members will be removed. Reduction will be achieved entirely through voluntary attrition.

Sentiments shared from the board reflect a well-considered determination that a smaller governing body is necessary to strengthen effectiveness and accountability. A more appropriately sized board will facilitate finding and appointing highly qualified individuals while making it easier to reach quorum, thereby enhancing deliberative efficiency and strategic focus. Maintaining a deaf majority is essential to the board's mission and institutional integrity. By ensuring that governance decisions are guided by deaf leadership grounded in lived experience, linguistic fluency, and cultural competence, this bill reinforces the core values of the Maryland School for the Deaf and strengthens its capacity to serve students effectively.

Senate Bill 339 positions the Board of Trustees to operate with greater clarity of purpose, disciplined oversight, and concentrated accountability. The benefits of this restructuring will extend beyond governance to the students, families, to the broader community who rely on the school's leadership and institutional excellence. I respectfully request a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Lewis Young". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Karen" being the most prominent.

Senator Karen Lewis Young

# **SB339 Testimony from GODHH.docx (3).pdf**

Uploaded by: Usherla DeBerry

Position: FAV

**Wes Moore**  
*Governor*

**Aruna Miller**  
*Lt. Governor*



**Usherla DeBerry**  
*Director*

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, Education, Energy, and the Environment  
Committee

FROM: Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

SUBJECT: SB0339 (Maryland School for the Deaf - Membership of Board of Trustees -  
Alterations)

Position: Favorable

HEARING DATE: February 27, 2026

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Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment  
Committee,

On behalf of the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GODHH), I, Director  
Usherla DeBerry, write in support of Senate Bill 339, which proposes alterations to the  
membership of the Maryland School for the Deaf Board of Trustees.

GODHH's mission is to promote the general welfare of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Marylanders  
through advocacy, policy guidance, and advancing equitable access. SB 339 aligns with this  
mission by strengthening Deaf representation on the Board of Trustees and ensuring that  
governance reflects lived experience and cultural competence.

While the bill reduces the total number of trustees, this change reflects sound governance  
principles. Smaller boards are widely recognized as more effective and efficient in carrying out  
fiduciary and strategic responsibilities. A streamlined board enhances deliberation, improves  
accountability, and allows members to engage more deeply in oversight and policy direction.  
Reducing the number of seats does not diminish representation; rather, this bill ensures that Deaf

individuals maintain strong and meaningful representation within a more focused governance structure.

The Maryland School for the Deaf plays a critical role in providing educational services to Deaf and Hard of Hearing students across the State. Ensuring that a majority of Board members are Deaf promotes lived experience representation and supports decision-making that reflects the cultural, linguistic, and educational realities of Deaf students and families. Meaningful Deaf representation on governing bodies is essential to advancing educational equity and preserving the integrity of Deaf-centered educational environments.

By requiring that at least seven members of the Board be Deaf, SB 339 reinforces the importance of lived experience in shaping educational policy and leadership decisions affecting Deaf students across Maryland. A board that is both efficiently structured and grounded in community perspective will better serve students, families, and stakeholders statewide.

For these reasons, GODHH respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 339. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Director Usherla DeBerry

Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing