



**BILL: HB 439**  
**POSITION: FAV – Favorable**  
**COMMITTEE: Government, Labor, and Elections**  
**DATE: February 13, 2026**

**SUBMITTED BY:** Maryland Department of Disabilities  
217 East Redwood Street, Suite 1300, Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Chair Wells,

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is pleased to submit this letter of support for **HB 439, Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals – Renaming.**

The bill's primary purpose is to: (1) rename the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) to the Office of the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing; and (2) rename the Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals to the Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing Individuals. MDOD commends this important revision that formally recognizes the unique needs and identity of individuals who are Deafblind within our state government's structure.

MDOD's Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM) Program oversees the delivery of statewide Maryland Relay services that provide the Deaf, Deafblind, and hard of hearing communities with accessible telecommunications and teleconferencing services. TAM also has a Communication Facilitator Service which focuses on meeting the highly individualized communications needs of Deafblind individuals. ODHH is a valuable partner for TAM and has a seat on the Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay that oversees TAM.

MDOD is happy to support HB 439 as it was originally drafted. However, we would like to thank the bill's sponsor, Del. Kaufman, and the director of ODHH, Usherla DeBerry, for entertaining an amendment to add MDOD as an ex officio member of the renamed Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing Individuals. This would allow MDOD to further ensure ongoing collaboration and alignment between TAM and ODHH.

Thank you for your consideration. MDOD respectfully requests a **favorable report on HB 439.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol A. Beatty".

Carol A. Beatty  
Secretary, Department of Disabilities