

Wes Moore
Governor

Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor



Usherla DeBerry
Director

TO: Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and the Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

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

SUBJECT: Testimony on HB439/SB665 (Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing - Renaming Act)

Position: Favorable

HEARING DATE: February 17, 2026

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Health Committee,

I am Usherla DeBerry, Director of the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and I am here to express our strong support for HB0439.

This bill updates the name of our agency to the Office of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing, and similarly renames the Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing to include DeafBlind in its title. This change reflects a long-overdue acknowledgment of the DeafBlind community as an integral part of our statewide mission.

Although HB0439 does not change our statutory duties, staffing, or programs, it has a meaningful impact:

It honors the identity and lived experience of DeafBlind Marylanders by formally including them in the name of the office and advisory council.

It clarifies our mission for the public and for partner agencies, improving accessibility and reducing confusion about who we serve.

It ensures that our organizational titles are fully inclusive and representative, consistent with best practices in equity and civil rights.

This renaming brings state law into alignment with the communities we serve and recognizes the full scope of our commitment to ensuring accessible, culturally competent services for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Marylanders.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB0439.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Usherla DeBerry

Director

Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing