



Maryland Association of the Deaf
Written Testimony
HB 866 – Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing - Case Management Services
Tuesday, February 24, 2026
Position: Favorable

President

Tina Joyner

The Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD) is a statewide organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the interests of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Marylanders in matters of accessibility, civil rights, and equity. There are approximately 1.2 million Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals living in the State of Maryland.

Vice President

Jacob Leffler

We write to express our strong support for HB 866, sponsored by Delegate Kaufman, regarding the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing - Case Management Services.

Secretary

Payal Sweet

For many Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Marylanders, navigating state systems can be overwhelming. Individuals often encounter communication barriers when seeking healthcare, housing assistance, employment services, mental health care, and public benefits. Without coordinated support, these barriers can lead to delayed services, lost opportunities, and preventable crises.

Treasurer

Smita Kothari

HB 866 ensures that dedicated case management services are available to help individuals effectively access and coordinate state resources. Professional case managers play a critical role in:

Board Members

Meredith DeSomma

Vikki Porter

Theo Conley

Kitty Fogarty

Bill Millios

Thelma Schroeder

- Connecting individuals to appropriate services and programs
- Coordinating communication access and accommodations
- Assisting with interagency navigation
- Preventing service gaps that can escalate into emergencies

By formalizing and strengthening case management capacity, this legislation promotes efficiency, accountability, and equitable access to services. It is a practical step that enhances outcomes while supporting Maryland's longstanding commitment to accessibility and inclusion.

The Deaf community in Maryland continues to face systemic barriers that require informed, culturally competent support. HB 866 represents a thoughtful and necessary investment in ensuring that state services are accessible and responsive to the needs of our community.

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of the Deaf respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 866.

Sincerely,

MDAD Board of Directors