

Chapter 655

(House Bill 439)

AN ACT concerning

Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Renaming

FOR the purpose of renaming the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to be the Office of the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing; renaming the Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing to be the Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing; altering the membership of the Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing; and generally relating to renaming the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – Education
Section 23–109(b)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2022 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
Article – Health – General
Section 7.5–302 and 13–603(a)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – Health – General
Section 7.5–303(a)(1)(xiii) and 13–603(b)(2)(ix)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
Article – Human Services
Section 7–127(a) and 7–802
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2019 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – Human Services
Section 7–128(13), 7–803(a)(8), and 10–1002(e)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2019 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

Article – State Government
 Section 9–2401(a)
 Annotated Code of Maryland
 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – State Government
 Section 9–2401(e) and (o), 9–2402(a), and ~~9–2404(a)~~ 9–2404 to be under the amended subtitle “Subtitle 24. Office of the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing”; and 10–1103.1(c)(2)
 Annotated Code of Maryland
 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – State Personnel and Pensions
 Section 29–304(10)
 Annotated Code of Maryland
 (2024 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

Article – Transportation
 Section 7–1109(b)
 Annotated Code of Maryland
 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – Transportation
 Section 7–1109(c)(10)
 Annotated Code of Maryland
 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Education

23–109.

(b) The Deaf Culture Digital Library shall:

(1) Conduct a needs assessment to identify gaps in library services for deaf patrons and to implement strategies to fill the gaps and better coordinate library services for the deaf;

(2) In coordination with the Governor's Office of the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing, develop and provide sensitivity training for State and county library staff to help them better understand deaf patrons and their needs;

(3) Develop a website that will allow for information sharing and coordination between the Deaf Culture Digital Library and county library systems;

(4) In coordination with the State Library Agency, develop deaf-related programs and materials and share them with county library systems and other libraries in the State;

(5) Develop partnerships and strategic alliances with other entities, including:

(i) The Governor's Office of the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing;

(ii) County library systems;

(iii) The State Library Agency;

(iv) Veterans' groups;

(v) State and local arts councils;

(vi) Senior citizens organizations; and

(vii) Deaf and hard of hearing organizations, including:

1. The National Association of the Deaf;

2. The Hearing Loss Association of America; and

3. The Maryland Association of the Deaf;

(6) Encourage partnerships and collaborations with information service providers to help provide virtual access to information and research;

(7) Form a Deaf Culture Digital Library Advisory Board to provide advice on initiatives that further advance the mission and goals of the Deaf Culture Digital Library and the majority of whose members are deaf or hard of hearing and selected from the following entities:

(i) County library systems;

(ii) The State Library Agency;

(iii) The Governor’s Office of the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing;

(iv) Statewide deaf and hard of hearing organizations; and

(v) Other organizations as agreed on by the Governor’s Office of the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing and the State Library Agency; and

(8) Establish a Deaf Culture Digital Library “Friends of the Library” group composed of individuals who are strongly committed, well-positioned, and able to promote community involvement, advocacy, and funding for the Deaf Culture Digital Library.

Article – Health – General

7.5–302.

There is a Behavioral Health Advisory Council in the Office of the Governor.

7.5–303.

(a) (1) The Council consists of the following members:

(xiii) The [Executive] Director of the Governor’s Office of the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing, or the [Executive] Director’s designee;

13–603.

(a) There is an Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Advisory Council for the Program.

(b) (2) Of the 12 members:

(ix) 1 shall be from the Governor’s Office of the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing.

Article – Human Services

7–127.

(a) There is an Interagency Disabilities Board convened by the Governor.

7–128.

The Board consists of the following members:

(13) the Director of the Governor’s Office of the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing, or the Director’s designee;

7–802.

There is a Governor’s Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay in the Department.

7–803.

(a) The Board shall be composed of 14 individuals appointed by the Governor, who shall designate the chair, including:

(8) one representative from the Governor’s Office of the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing.

10–1002.

(e) The Department shall administer, supervise, and coordinate the Program with the cooperation of the Department of Disabilities, the Department of Human Services, the Governor’s Office of the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing, and the Maryland Department of Health.

Article – State Government

Subtitle 24. Office of the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing.

9–2401.

(a) In this subtitle the following words have the meanings indicated.

(e) “Council” means the Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing Individuals.

(o) “Office” means the Office of the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing.

9–2402.

(a) In the Office of the Governor, there is an Office of the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing.

9–2404.

(a) There is a Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing.

(b) (1) The Council consists of [18] members appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate.

(2) Of the [18] Council members, at least five of the members shall be deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

(c) Of the [18] Council members:

(1) one shall be the State Superintendent or a designee from the State Department of Education;

(2) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Maryland Department of Health;

(3) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Department of Human Services;

(4) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Department of Transportation;

(5) one shall be from the Commission on Civil Rights;

(6) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Maryland Department of Labor;

(7) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Department of Housing and Community Development;

(8) one shall be the Superintendent or a designee from the Maryland School for the Deaf;

(9) one shall be the Secretary or a designee from the Department of Aging;
[and]

(10) **ONE SHALL BE THE SECRETARY OR A DESIGNEE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES; AND**

(11) nine shall be from the general public.

(d) (1) The nine members from the general public shall be chosen from different geographical areas of the State.

(2) Of the nine members from the general public:

(i) five shall be deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(ii) one shall be a private citizen with special knowledge or expertise relating to services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(iii) one shall be a parent of a deaf or hard of hearing child;

(iv) one shall be from a private agency providing services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals; and

(v) one shall be a person with special knowledge or expertise relating to services to individuals who are deafblind.

10-1103.1.

(c) The Advisory Group shall include:

(2) the Director of the Office of the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing, or the Director's designee;

Article – State Personnel and Pensions

29-304.

An individual shall have immediate vesting rights on taking office in the State system in which the individual is a member if the individual is the:

(10) Director of the Office of the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing;

Article – Transportation

7-1109.

(b) There is a State Coordinating Committee for Health and Human Services Transportation.

(c) The Committee consists of the following members:

(10) The Director of the [Governor's] Office [for] **OF** the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing, or the Director's designee;

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That, as provided in this Act:

(a) The Office of the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing is the successor of the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

(b) In every law, executive order, rule, regulation, policy, or document created by an official, an employee, or a unit of this State, the names and titles of those agencies and officials mean the names and titles of the successor agency or official.

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That nothing in this Act affects the term of office of an appointed or elected member of any commission, office, department, agency, or other unit. An individual who is a member of a unit on the effective date of this Act shall remain for the balance of the term to which appointed or elected, unless the member sooner dies, resigns, or is removed under provisions of law.

SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That any transaction or employment status affected by or flowing from any change of nomenclature or any statute amended by this Act and validly entered into or existing before the effective date of this Act and every right, duty, or interest flowing from a statute amended by this Act remains valid after the effective date of this Act and may be terminated, completed, consummated, or enforced as required or allowed by any statute amended by this Act as though the amendment had not occurred. If a change in nomenclature involves a change in name or designation of any State unit, the successor unit shall be considered in all respects as having the powers and obligations granted the former unit.

SECTION 5. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

(a) The continuity of every commission, office, department, agency, or other unit is retained.

(b) The personnel, records, files, furniture, fixtures, and other properties and all appropriations, credits, assets, liabilities, and obligations of each retained unit are continued as the personnel, records, files, furniture, fixtures, properties, appropriations, credits, assets, liabilities, and obligations of the unit under the laws enacted by this Act.

SECTION 6. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That letterhead, business cards, and other documents reflecting the renaming of the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to be the Office of the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing may not be used until all letterhead, business cards, and other documents already in print and reflecting the name of the Office before the effective date of this Act have been used.

SECTION 7. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the publisher of the Annotated Code of Maryland, in consultation with and subject to the approval of the Department of Legislative Services, shall correct, with no further action required by the General Assembly, cross-references and terminology rendered incorrect by this Act. The publisher shall adequately describe any correction that is made in an editor's note following the section affected.

SECTION 8. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2026.

Approved by the Governor, May 26, 2026.