

HOUSE BILL 439

P1

6lr2030
CF SB 665

By: **Delegates Kaufman, Embry, Lopez, Patterson, ~~and Woorman~~ Woorman, Crutchfield, Fair, Kerr, Lehman, Ruth, Schindler, Schmidt, Terrasa, Wells, and Wu**

Introduced and read first time: January 22, 2026
Assigned to: Government, Labor, and Elections

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments
House action: Adopted
Read second time: February 18, 2026

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

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

4 FOR the purpose of renaming the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to be the Office
5 of the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing; renaming the Maryland Advisory
6 Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing to be the Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf,
7 Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing; altering the membership of the Maryland Advisory
8 Council on the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing; and generally relating to
9 renaming the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Maryland Advisory
10 Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

11 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
12 Article – Education
13 Section 23–109(b)
14 Annotated Code of Maryland
15 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

16 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
17 Article – Health – General
18 Section 7.5–302 and 13–603(a)
19 Annotated Code of Maryland
20 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



- 1 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
2 Article – Health – General
3 Section 7.5–303(a)(1)(xiii) and 13–603(b)(2)(ix)
4 Annotated Code of Maryland
5 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)
- 6 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
7 Article – Human Services
8 Section 7–127(a) and 7–802
9 Annotated Code of Maryland
10 (2019 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)
- 11 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
12 Article – Human Services
13 Section 7–128(13), 7–803(a)(8), and 10–1002(e)
14 Annotated Code of Maryland
15 (2019 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)
- 16 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
17 Article – State Government
18 Section 9–2401(a)
19 Annotated Code of Maryland
20 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)
- 21 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
22 Article – State Government
23 Section 9–2401(e) and (o), 9–2402(a), and ~~9–2404(a)~~ 9–2404 to be under the amended
24 subtitle “Subtitle 24. Office of the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing”; and
25 10–1103.1(c)(2)
26 Annotated Code of Maryland
27 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)
- 28 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
29 Article – State Personnel and Pensions
30 Section 29–304(10)
31 Annotated Code of Maryland
32 (2024 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)
- 33 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
34 Article – Transportation
35 Section 7–1109(b)
36 Annotated Code of Maryland
37 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)
- 38 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
39 Article – Transportation
40 Section 7–1109(c)(10)

1 Annotated Code of Maryland
2 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

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

5 **Article – Education**

6 23–109.

7 (b) The Deaf Culture Digital Library shall:

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

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

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

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

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

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

23 (ii) County library systems;

24 (iii) The State Library Agency;

25 (iv) Veterans’ groups;

26 (v) State and local arts councils;

27 (vi) Senior citizens organizations; and

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

29 1. The National Association of the Deaf;

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

3 **Article – Human Services**

4 7–127.

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

6 7–128.

7 The Board consists of the following members:

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

10 7–802.

11 There is a Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay in the
12 Department.

13 7–803.

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

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

18 10–1002.

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

23 **Article – State Government**

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

25 9–2401.

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

1 (e) "Council" means the Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and
2 Hard of Hearing Individuals.

3 (o) "Office" means the Office of the Deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, and Hard of Hearing.

4 9-2402.

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

7 9-2404.

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

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

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

14 (c) Of the [18] Council members:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5 (11) nine shall be from the general public.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 10-1103.1.

18 (c) The Advisory Group shall include:

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

21 **Article – State Personnel and Pensions**

22 29-304.

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

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

26 **Article – Transportation**

27 7-1109.

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

3 (c) The Committee consists of the following members:

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

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

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

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

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

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

26 SECTION 5. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

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

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

33 SECTION 6. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That letterhead, business cards,
34 and other documents reflecting the renaming of the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
35 to be the Office of the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing may not be used until all

1 letterhead, business cards, and other documents already in print and reflecting the name
2 of the Office before the effective date of this Act have been used.

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

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

Approved:

Governor.

Speaker of the House of Delegates.

President of the Senate.