

# HOUSE BILL 866

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6lr2029

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By: **Delegates Kaufman and Taveras**

Introduced and read first time: February 4, 2026

Assigned to: Health

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Case Management Services**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring at least a certain number of positions for the Office of the  
4 Deaf and Hard of Hearing to hire case managers who specialize in helping deaf,  
5 deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals; requiring the Office to provide case  
6 management services to deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals; and  
7 generally relating to case management services by the Office of the Deaf and Hard  
8 of Hearing.

9 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
10 Article – State Government  
11 Section 9–2402 and 9–2403  
12 Annotated Code of Maryland  
13 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

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

16 **Article – State Government**

17 9–2402.

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

20 (b) (1) The head of the Office is the Director.

21 (2) (i) The Director is appointed by the Governor with the advice and  
22 consent of the Senate.

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



(ii) The Director serves at the pleasure of the Governor and is responsible directly to the Governor.

(3) The Director shall be:

(i) a deaf or hard of hearing person; and

(ii) knowledgeable and experienced with issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

(4) The Director is entitled to the salary provided in the State budget.

(c) (1) The Office shall:

(i) advise the Governor on all matters assigned to the Office; and

(ii) carry out the Governor's policies on the matters assigned to the Office.

(2) The Director shall:

(i) manage the operation of the Office and establish guidelines and procedures to promote the orderly and efficient operation of the Office; and

(ii) adopt regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of this subtitle.

(3) Subject to the provisions of this subtitle, the Director may establish, reorganize, or consolidate areas of responsibility in the Office as necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned by the Director.

(d) (1) The Office shall be given adequate staff and funding to carry out its duties.

**(2) THE OFFICE SHALL INCLUDE AT LEAST THREE POSITIONS TO CONDUCT THE DUTIES OF THE OFFICE TO PROVIDE SPECIALIZED CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES TO ASSIST:**

**(I) DEAF INDIVIDUALS;**

**(II) DEAFBLIND INDIVIDUALS; AND**

**(III) HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS.**

1 (a) The Office shall be responsible for promoting the general welfare of deaf and  
2 hard of hearing individuals in the State.

3 (b) The responsibilities of the Office shall include:

4 (1) providing, advocating, and coordinating the adoption of public policies,  
5 regulations, and programs that will benefit deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

6 (2) improving access to communication and to existing services and  
7 programs for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

8 (3) providing direct services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals as  
9 appropriate;

10 (4) increasing public awareness of the needs and issues affecting deaf and  
11 hard of hearing individuals;

12 (5) working with State and local agencies to ensure access for deaf and hard  
13 of hearing individuals to safety and emergency services;

14 (6) developing a referral service for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

15 (7) serving as an information clearinghouse on the needs and issues  
16 affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

17 (8) working to increase access for deaf and hard of hearing individuals to  
18 educational, health, and social opportunities;

19 (9) working with private organizations, the federal government, and other  
20 units of State government to promote economic development for deaf and hard of hearing  
21 individuals;

22 (10) working to eliminate the underemployment and unemployment of deaf  
23 and hard of hearing individuals;

24 (11) providing a network through which services provided by State and  
25 federal programs serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals can be channeled;

26 (12) promoting compliance with State, local, and federal laws and policies  
27 protecting and serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

28 (13) providing appropriate staff to assist the Board in carrying out its duties;  
29 [and]

30 (14) providing a nomination process for Board appointments; **AND**

**(15) IN COORDINATION WITH RELEVANT UNITS OF STATE GOVERNMENT, PROVIDING SPECIALIZED CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES TO DEAF, DEAFBLIND, AND HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS.**

(c) The Office shall hold at least two public town hall meetings each year to receive public comments on:

(1) the quality of State services and programs affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(2) the functions and operations of the Office; and

(3) any other issues that affect deaf and hard of hearing individuals, including those specified in subsection (b) of this section.

(d) The Office shall:

(1) help facilitate the appropriate delivery of State, local, and other public services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(2) advise other units of State government and the General Assembly on the needs of deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(3) subject to appropriations in the State budget, provide any reasonable resources that any other unit of State government requests to serve or assist deaf and hard of hearing individuals; and

(4) to the greatest extent possible, in order to avoid any duplication of effort, coordinate with other units of the State and the federal government the services provided to deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2026.