

HOUSE BILL 866

03

6lr2029

By: **Delegates Kaufman and Taveras**

Introduced and read first time: February 4, 2026

Assigned to: Health

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.

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 (3) The Director shall be:

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

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

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

8 (c) (1) The Office shall:

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

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

12 (2) The Director shall:

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

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

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

25 (I) DEAF INDIVIDUALS:

26 (II) DEAFBLIND INDIVIDUALS: AND

27 (III) HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS

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

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

(2) improving access to communication and to existing services and 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

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

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

8 (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.

11 (d) The Office shall:

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

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

22 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
23 1, 2026.