



Larry Hogan | Governor Boyd K. Rutherford | Lt. Governor Rona E. Kramer | Secretary

DATE: March 10, 2020
BILL: SB851 – Human Services – Department of Disabilities – Accessibility Programs
COMMITTEE: Finance
POSITION: Support

The Department of Aging is pleased to submit this letter of support for Senate Bill 851, which transfers the operations and oversight of the Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM) program from the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) to the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD).

The Department of Aging works to establish Maryland as an attractive location for all older adults through vibrant communities and supportive services that offer the opportunity to live healthy and meaningful lives. HB1003 is important to the Department because some of the individuals we serve are in need of supportive services such as TAM.

The TAM program serves users with a wide range of accessibility needs, including Marylanders who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, Blind/low vision, as well as Marylanders with physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities. The range of constituents receiving TAM services is similar to that which is being served and supported by MDOD. MDOD has a strong constituent services and outreach team and can help expand TAM’s reach to people with speech and other disabilities.

Additionally, the proposed legislation will cross-pollinate existing stakeholder groups to open channels of communication by: adding a representative from the Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay as a standing member of the Maryland Commission on Disabilities (MDOD’s advisory board); adding a representative from the Maryland Commission on Disabilities as a standing member of the Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay; and adding a representative from the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing as a standing member of the Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay.

For these reason, the Department of Aging strongly supports this bill and urges the committee to give this legislation a favorable report. If you have any questions, please contact Grace Fielhauer, Legislative Liaison, at grace.fielhauer@maryland.gov or (410) 767-5953.