



March 10, 2020

Dear Senators,

As a vice president of Howard County Association of the Deaf, I **oppose** the Senate Bill - SB0851. SB0851 is proposing that the Telecommunication Access of Maryland (TAM) program would be transferred to the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) from Maryland Department of Information Technology (DOIT).

Instead of MDOD, I strongly **recommend** having TAM transferred to the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH). Since 2001, ODDH was established via Chapter 537 of the Acts of 2001 General Assembly. ODHH is the sole state office that provides expertise related to Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals in Maryland.

ODHH meets the criteria: resources, experiences, deaf employees, and knowledge. ODHH will save MDOD's time, effort, money, and hassle. Thus it will minimize challenges that MDOD might deal with.

ODHH has vast understanding of the communication barriers that Deaf and Hard of Hearing people deal with while MDOD has great understanding of physical challenges that their disabled people have. MDOD has a different background from ODHH. Hence ODHH with their expertise would be an appropriate place for TAM. Because of ODHH's expertise, it will help TAM continue thriving.

I strongly propose that ODHH takes the task of operating TAM. Please either amend this SB0851 bill to replace MDOD with ODHH or withdraw the bill SB0851.

Thank you for listening to my concerns.

Sincerely,

Elke Pieters
HCAD Vice President