

HB1003  
Opposed  
fuzzyw5@yahoo.com

Dear Delegate,

My name is Michele Westfall, and I'm Deaf. I'm a parent of two Deaf children, and I'm also a board member of the Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

My position on HB1003 is Opposed. The Maryland State Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is a fine department, but it is not the right department for Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM). Most importantly, the Deputy Secretary of MDOD states that the mission of MDOD is to ensure that the voices of people with disabilities are heard, \*yet\* he did not consult with anyone in the Deaf community, Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the Maryland Governor's Office on Deaf and Hard of Hearing! This is unacceptable.

TAM should be transferred to the Maryland Governor's Office on Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH). ODHH is staffed by people who are experts on technology and how such technology are used by Deaf people, Blind people and others. ODHH knows its stuff, and TAM would be in excellent hands. Most importantly, such a move would be in line with other relay centers in other states. Relay centers in other states are typically housed either within their state's IT department or their office of deaf and hard of hearing. Maryland should follow that model, as it has worked well for others.

However, if you feel otherwise, I ask that this bill be sent to a summer study, led by ODHH. ODHH will do a wonderful job of conducting the study and making sure everyone has all the information they need.

To sum up, my position on this bill is Opposed. TAM should be transferred to ODHH. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michele Westfall  
Active, registered voter  
Parent  
Board member of Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
fuzzyw5@yahoo.com