



**Maryland Association of the Deaf  
Written Testimony**

**HB 823 - Fire Protection and Prevention - Sprinkler Systems and Smoke  
Alarms - Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)**

**Tuesday February 20, 2024**

**Position: Favorable**

**President**

Tina Joyner

The Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD) is a statewide organization that protects the interests of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Marylanders regarding accessibility and equality issues.

**Vice President**

Jacob Leffler

MDAD supports the bill, HB 823, that is sponsored by Delegate Charkoudian. There are approximately 1.2 million Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals living in the State of Maryland. We have heard many stories where the landlord would not purchase or obtain a smoke detector/fire alarm for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing tenants. Some landlords would make the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing tenant pay for it and are not reimbursed.

**Secretary**

Tiasha Bera

**Treasurer**

Allysa Dittmar

Most recently, a Deaf woman who lived in the apartment building for several years in Silver Spring. The building was on fire in February 2023. She has asked her landlord several times for the fire alarm or smoke detector and her landlord refuses. She was lucky enough to have someone go into her room and wake her up to get out of the building as soon as possible. In our view, this violates her right to have reasonable accommodation and feeling safe at her own home.

**Board Members**

Vikki Porter

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Landlords need to be responsible for their buildings and units. They are the one who decides to allow a person to live in their home. If there is an issue with their home, the tenant must contact the landlord and the landlord will need to solve the issue. It is the same conception and responsibility with the smoke detector and fire alarm for a Deaf tenant. The landlords are responsible to make sure that all the tenants are in safe space with all the necessary devices.

For the sake of safety and peace of mind on Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing tenants, MDAD requests the favorable report of the bill, HB 823. This will make sure that landlords are responsible to provide the smoke detector or fire alarm according to the American with Disabilities Act.

MDAD Board of Directors