

TERRI L. HILL, M.D.

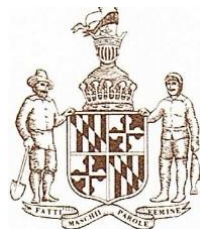
Legislative District 12A

Howard County

**Health and Government Operations
Committee**

Subcommittees

Government Operations and
Health Facilities
Public Health and Minority
Health Disparities



**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF
DELEGATES**

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**The Maryland House of
Delegates**

Annapolis Office

6 Bladen Street, Room 404
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

410-841-3378 | 301-858-3378
800-492-7122 Ext. 3378

Fax 410-841-3197 | 301-858-3197
Terri.Hill@house.state.md

February 21, 2024

**HB893- Primary and Secondary Students and Adults - Vision and Hearing Studies and
Evaluations**

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee

HB893 addresses a pressing issue: primary and secondary school students' access to adequate vision and hearing support services. The amendment addresses these issues for adults. Research shows that students with vision impairments face disparities in reading performance and learning ability. Interventions and treatments to correct vision and hearing impairments enhance their literacy skills, significantly improving their educational outcomes for students.

Adults with these impairments experience disparities in their mental health, cognition, social function, employment, and educational attainment. Treatments to correct adult impairments show improved quality of life, work, and economic productivity.

There is insufficient data on the prevalence of vision and hearing difficulties among students and adults. Therefore, it's imperative to identify and address the obstacles experienced by Marylanders to enhance their abilities to succeed academically and professionally.

This bill takes a crucial initial step to establish a needs assessment workgroup. The goal is to enhance access to vision and hearing support services statewide by fostering collaboration between the State Department of Education and the Maryland Department of Health. This collaborative effort will involve stakeholders such as county boards of education, local health departments, professional associations, and relevant service providers. The workgroup will undertake a comprehensive approach to bridge the gap in vision and hearing treatments and services for students and adults statewide, which include:

- Studying the incidence and prevalence of vision and hearing difficulties;
- Evaluating existing policies and programs to identify service gaps;
- Assessing the impact of insurance coverage and other contributing factors;
- Reviewing screening policies and funding levels for support programs.

In summary, House Bill 893 is pivotal in enhancing access to vision and hearing support services across Maryland. I urge your support for this legislation to benefit our communities and ensure equal opportunities for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Terri Hill'.