



Maryland Association of the Deaf
Written Testimony
HB 1521 - State Board of Social Work Examiners - Membership
and Examination Requirements
Thursday, March 13, 2025
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 1521, that is sponsored by Delegate Woods. Many Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing people who graduated with a Social Work degree from Gallaudet and other universities are struggling with the Social Worker Examination for numerous reasons. For many Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing candidates, the linguistic structure of the test items (problematic from the outset because this population has a different experience acquiring and accessing English) and cultural bias of the examination has profoundly impacted access to licensure, employment, ability to serve their population, and advancement in their profession.

Secretary

Tiasha Bera

Treasurer

Allysa Dittmar

Oftentimes, Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing people's first language is not English, so they learn English in school. We are less exposed to multiple meanings to the words, especially the kind of English used on standardized tests. We do not have access to incidental learning through English or another language spoken in our environment. Hearing test-takers who are native English language speakers can use strategies that are auditorily based to determine the correct answer. They can fill in information based on unhampered access to the language; strategies that may be more difficult for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing test-takers.

Board Members

Meredith DeSomma

Vikki Porter

Blaise Delahoussaye

Philip Mecham

Thelma Schroeder

Another issue that is faced in our community is that there are not enough Deaf Licensed Clinical Social Workers who can supervise other Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals with social work degrees to meet their hours to get a license. With that, Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing candidates have to communicate with hearing social workers through an interpreter and many of them do not understand Deaf Culture and how we address issues as a Deaf individual. Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing candidates prefer to have direct communication and for someone to understand their lived experiences.

The passing of this bill will address these issues and create more opportunities for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Social Workers to practice in the State of Maryland.

We look forward to a favorable outcome to HB 1521.

MDAD Board of Directors