

Wes Moore
Governor

Usherla DeBerry
Director

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Lt. Governor



TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

SUBJECT: Testimony on HB866 (Workgroup for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing - Extension)

Position: Favorable

HEARING DATE: March 26, 2026

The Maryland Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) respectfully submits this Letter of Support for HB0866, the extension of the Maryland Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Workgroup.

The Workgroup was established to examine systemic barriers affecting Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Marylanders in areas such as communication access, employment, healthcare, emergency preparedness, education, and interagency coordination. Through collaboration among State agencies, community organizations, and advocacy groups, the Workgroup has made meaningful progress in identifying service gaps and evaluating potential policy improvements.

ODHH supports extending the Workgroup to allow additional time for comprehensive data collection, stakeholder engagement, and development of thoughtful, actionable recommendations. Because many of the issues under review involve cross-agency coordination and long-term policy considerations, additional time will help ensure that further recommendations are well-developed, operationally feasible, and aligned with Maryland's fiscal and administrative framework.

An extension will strengthen the quality of the Workgroup's final report and provide the General Assembly with more complete, data-informed findings to guide future decision-making. ODHH

appreciates the Committee's continued commitment to improving access and equity for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Marylanders and respectfully urges favorable consideration of HB0866.

Thank you for your consideration. ODHH remains available to provide additional information or respond to any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Director Usherla DeBerry

Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing