

# Maryland Department of Health

## Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Advisory Council

*Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary*

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The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair  
The Honorable Cheryl Kagan, Vice Chair  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

February 20, 2026

Re: SB502/HB879

Dear Senator Feldman and members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

We would like to submit an official Letter of support with amendments regarding SB502/HB879 – Language Acquisition and Tracking for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children.

We are writing to express our suggestions regarding SB502/HB879, the bill addressing language acquisition and tracking for deaf and hard-of-hearing children. We all have the shared goal of ensuring no child falls behind in language development, we have suggestions about the bill's current implementation, particularly with respect to professional exclusions and administrative feasibility. We have outlined specific suggestions below:

- **Missing Expertise:** The bill does not explicitly require Audiologists or Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) to serve on the Advisory Committee. We urge the inclusion of these professionals as required members, given their critical expertise in language acquisition and hearing technologies including technical expertise required for cochlear implants, hearing aids, or classroom FM/DM systems.

- **Feasibility of Assessment Timeline:** The six-month assessment requirement may overwhelm already burdened related-service providers. We suggest re-evaluating this timeline and adopting a more feasible schedule.

- **Duplication of Services and Role Clarification:** The bill introduces a new state-level layer that could duplicate work already performed by local school systems and programs, potentially disrupting the trust between families and their local providers. We recommend clearly defining who is considered an assessment specialist and distinguishing between state-level employees and existing local staff.

- **Language from Home Definition:** There is a need for a specific metric to track the child's primary language exposure at home. This should be clearly defined to ensure accurate data collection.

- **ASL Transition Tracking:** Many families do not sign with their children initially. It is important to track how and when families are introduced to ASL and monitor the child's progress post-introduction.

- **Comprehensive Language Acquisition:** The tracking tool must measure both ASL and spoken language acquisition with equal weight, particularly to support children who may be behind in either or both.

We respectfully request that these suggestions be addressed and incorporated into SB502/HB879.

**Maryland Department of Health**  
**Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Advisory Council**

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Danielle M. Previ'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'D' and a distinct 'P'.

Danielle M. Previ, PhD and the Maryland EHDI Committee Members

Advisory Council to the Maryland Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program