

## Vikki Porter's HB866 Written Testimony

Position: Favorable

Good day, everyone:

I'm happy to be here to testify in favor of HB866 (Workgroup for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing-Extension). I am a current member of the workgroup in question, and we have done a lot thus far, and yet still have much, much, much more work to do. This extension to December 31, 2028 would help tremendously towards that effort.

As former Secretary of the Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MACDHH), I saw for myself the obstacles that Deaf/DeafBlind/Hard of Hearing Marylanders had to navigate...sometimes having to go above, around, beyond, and through these obstacles. MACDHH usually hosts townhalls after the quarterly council meetings. These townhalls were opportunities for these constituents and/or their personal caregivers or professional case managers to express their frustrations in getting adequate services from the state of Maryland. As a current Board Member of the Maryland Association of the Deaf, I frequently hear from members and nonmembers about similar issues. Lack of communication was the number one complaint, as well as attitudinal bias towards the Deaf/DeafBlind/Hard of Hearing communities.

With the additional timeframe, the workgroup can continue to perform data collection, study the complex intricacies of various services provided by different agencies, identify gaps and overlaps, and develop strategies to enable the community to obtain much needed case management services with much less red tape.

I strongly encourage the committee to give a favorable rating for this bill. Thank you very much!

Vikki Porter

Member, Workgroup for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing

Board Member, Maryland Association of the Deaf

Former Secretary, Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing