



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Sponsor Testimony

Workgroup for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing - Extension HB 866

Delegate Aaron Kaufman

03/26 at 1:00 p.m.

Good afternoon Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Committee.

I am Delegate Aaron Kaufman, and I respectfully request a favorable report on HB866, Workgroup for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Extension.

This Workgroup was originally established through House Bill 1069, which was favorably reported by this Committee and enacted in 2024. Its purpose was to examine systemic service gaps impacting Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Marylanders. The findings to date highlight ongoing barriers in behavioral health access, transportation, interpreter coordination, employment services, and cross-agency case management. Following discussions with the Governor's Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, we discovered that there are many issues that still need to be researched and examined by the Workgroup. This bill extends the Workgroup through December 31, 2028, with a final report due to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 1, 2028.

The Workgroup has made progress and has already generated concrete recommendations this session. For instance, one of their recommendations was to rename the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to the Governor's Office of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing to accurately reflect the

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communities it serves. I introduced HB439 this legislative session and it passed the House unanimously and is currently in the Senate¹. This reflects that the recommendations are producing concrete legislative results. HB866 allows the Workgroup to complete a comprehensive, data-driven evaluation and deliver durable, fiscally responsible recommendations.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on HB866. Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions.

¹ H.B. 439, 2026 Leg., Reg. Sess. (Md. 2026), <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2026RS/bills/hb/hb0439F.pdf>