



**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

**SB 665: Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf  
and Hard of Hearing – Renaming**

**Official Testimony of Senator Kevin M. Harris**

**March 31, 2026**

Chair Wells, Vice-Chair Kerr and Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee,  
SB 665 seeks to rename the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Maryland Advisory  
Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Maryland's current statutory title, the Governor's Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the  
Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing, does not explicitly recognize Deafblind  
Marylanders, despite the office routinely supporting individuals with combined vision and hearing  
loss. This mismatch between name and mission can create confusion for residents seeking services  
and for agencies that partner with the office.

This legislation makes a simple, technical correction: it changes the name of the Office of the Deaf  
and Hard of Hearing to Office of the Office of Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing and it changes  
the name of the Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing to the Maryland  
Advisory Council on Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing. This bill updates references across the  
Maryland Code to ensure consistency. Nothing in the bill changes the office's duties, authority, or  
staffing. It simply brings statutory language into alignment with the communities served and  
improves clarity for families, providers, and state agencies.

The need for this change was reinforced by the recent workgroup for the Deaf, Deafblind, and  
Hard of Hearing, which recommended updating the office's name so that state materials clearly  
reflect the population served and reduce confusion for Deafblind residents seeking navigation  
support. Other states including Colorado, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island use naming  
conventions that explicitly include Deafblind communities, mirroring a national trend toward  
clearer and more inclusive terminology in accessibility-focused agencies.

I respectfully request a favorable report of HB665