

Ways and Means Committee
130 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

The Maryland Association of the Deaf Coalition, a network of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing organizations across Maryland, writes collectively to express our strong support for House Bill 879, which establishes the Language Acquisition Tracking Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children.

Early and consistent access to language development is essential for the educational, social, and cognitive growth of deaf and hard of hearing children. HB 879 will ensure:

- Comprehensive tracking of language development, enabling families and educators to address delays promptly.
- Statewide coordination and expertise through a designated State Coordinator, supporting consistent assessment and reporting.
- Equitable access for families across Maryland, including both signed and spoken language options.

By creating this program, Maryland will provide families and educators the tools and guidance needed to support the full potential of deaf and hard of hearing children. This aligns with our shared mission to advance inclusion, education, and opportunity for all Marylanders in the deaf community.

We strongly urge the Committee to vote in favor of HB 879.

Thank you for your attention and support.

Tina Joyner, President
Maryland Association of the Deaf

Linda Stoltz, President
Maryland Deaf Community Center

John Thuahnai, President
Greater Washington Asian Deaf Association

Payal Sweet, Director
Metro South Asian Deaf Association

Jacob Leffler, President
Baltimore City Association of the Deaf

Gabrielle Davis, President
Prince George's County Association of the Deaf

Jackie Kanekuni, President
Frederick Deaf Seniors

Michelle Westfall, President
Free State Chapter of the Gallaudet University
Alumni Association

Deborah Hill, President
Maryland School for the Deaf Alumni
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Eddie Martinez, Jr., President
Metro Washington Association of the DeafBlind

Thelma Schroeder, President
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