

Wes Moore
Governor

Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor



Usherla DeBerry
Director

TO: Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

SUBJECT: SB0339/HB1052/ (Maryland School for the Deaf - Membership of Board of Trustees - Alterations)

Position: Favorable

HEARING DATE: March 25, 2026

Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

On behalf of the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GODHH), I, Director Usherla DeBerry, write in support of Senate Bill 339, which proposes alterations to the membership of the Maryland School for the Deaf Board of Trustees.

GODHH's mission is to promote the general welfare of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Marylanders through advocacy, policy guidance, and advancing equitable access. HB 339 aligns with this mission by strengthening Deaf representation on the Board of Trustees and ensuring that governance reflects lived experience and cultural competence.

While the bill reduces the total number of trustees, this change reflects sound governance principles. Smaller boards are widely recognized as more effective and efficient in carrying out fiduciary and strategic responsibilities. A streamlined board enhances deliberation, improves accountability, and allows members to engage more deeply in oversight and policy direction. Reducing the number of seats does not diminish representation; rather, this bill ensures that Deaf

individuals maintain strong and meaningful representation within a more focused governance structure.

The Maryland School for the Deaf plays a critical role in providing educational services to Deaf and Hard of Hearing students across the State. Ensuring that a majority of Board members are Deaf promotes lived experience representation and supports decision-making that reflects the cultural, linguistic, and educational realities of Deaf students and families. Meaningful Deaf representation on governing bodies is essential to advancing educational equity and preserving the integrity of Deaf-centered educational environments.

By requiring that at least seven members of the Board be Deaf, HB 339 reinforces the importance of lived experience in shaping educational policy and leadership decisions affecting Deaf students across Maryland. A board that is both efficiently structured and grounded in community perspective will better serve students, families, and stakeholders statewide.

For these reasons, GODHH respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 339. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Director Usherla DeBerry

Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing