

Maryland Department of Health

Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Advisory Council

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

Current Members
Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins, Chair
Delegate Jessica Feldmark, Vice Chair
130 Taylor House Office Building
131 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Thomas Horejes, PhD, CDI, Chair
Danielle Previ, PhD, Vice Chair
February 20, 2026 Re: SB502/HB879

Jennifer Bissett
Dear Senator Feldman and members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

Christopher Chapman
We would like to submit an official Letter of support with amendments regarding SB502/HB879 – Language Acquisition and Tracking for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children.

Mara Clement

Usherla DeBerry Ed,S
We are writing to express our suggestions regarding SB502/HB879, the bill addressing language acquisition and tracking for deaf and hard-of-hearing children. We all have the shared goal of ensuring no child falls behind in language development, we have suggestions about the bill’s current implementation, particularly with respect to professional exclusions and administrative feasibility. We have outlined specific suggestions below:

Amy Gaskin, AuD

Lisa Howey

Carolyn Jenks, MD
• **Missing Expertise:** The bill does not explicitly require Audiologists or Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) to serve on the Advisory Committee. We urge the inclusion of these professionals as required members, given their critical expertise in language acquisition and hearing technologies including technical expertise required for cochlear implants, hearing aids, or classroom FM/DM systems.

Joseph Kelleher

Patricia Muldowney

Jamie Perry, MD, MPH

Julie Steinberg, JD
• **Feasibility of Assessment Timeline:** The six-month assessment requirement may overwhelm already burdened related-service providers. We suggest re-evaluating this timeline and adopting a more feasible schedule.

Council Coordinator

Yasmine Price, MS, CHES
• **Duplication of Services and Role Clarification:** The bill introduces a new state-level layer that could duplicate work already performed by local school systems and programs, potentially disrupting the trust between families and their local providers. We recommend clearly defining who is considered an assessment specialist and distinguishing between state-level employees and existing local staff.

• **Language from Home Definition:** There is a need for a specific metric to track the child’s primary language exposure at home. This should be clearly defined to ensure accurate data collection.

• **ASL Transition Tracking:** Many families do not sign with their children initially. It is important to track how and when families are introduced to ASL and monitor the child’s progress post-introduction.

• **Comprehensive Language Acquisition:** The tracking tool must measure both ASL and spoken language acquisition with equal weight, particularly to support children who may be behind in either or both.

We respectfully request that these suggestions be addressed and incorporated into SB502/HB879.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Danielle M. Previ', written in a cursive style.

Danielle M. Previ, PhD and the Maryland EHDI Committee Members

Advisory Council to the Maryland Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program