

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

House Bill 866 (Delegates Kaufman and Taveras)
 Health

Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing - Case Management Services

This bill requires the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH), in coordination with relevant units of State government, to provide specialized case management services to deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals. ODHH must include at least three positions to provide specialized case management services to assist deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: ODHH general fund expenditures increase by \$212,500 in FY 2027 to hire three case managers, as discussed below. Future years reflect annualization and ongoing costs. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	212,500	246,200	257,900	269,600	281,400
Net Effect	(\$212,500)	(\$246,200)	(\$257,900)	(\$269,600)	(\$281,400)

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: ODHH was established in 2001 to promote the general welfare of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the State. ODHH must fulfill the following duties and responsibilities:

- provide, advocate, and coordinate the adoption of public policies, regulations, and programs that will benefit deaf and hard of hearing individuals;
- improve access to communication and to existing services and programs for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;
- provide direct services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals, as appropriate;
- increase public awareness of the needs and issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals;
- work with State and local agencies to ensure access for deaf and hard of hearing individuals to safety and emergency services;
- develop a referral service for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;
- serve as an information clearinghouse on the needs and issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals;
- increase access for deaf and hard of hearing individuals to educational, health, and social opportunities;
- work with private organizations, the federal government, and other units of State government to promote economic development for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;
- work to eliminate the underemployment and unemployment of deaf and hard of hearing individuals;
- provide a network through which services provided by State and federal programs serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals can be channeled; and
- promote compliance with State, local, and federal laws and policies protecting and serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Pursuant to Title 9 of the State Government Article, ODHH must be given adequate staff and funding to carry out its duties. The Director of ODHH may establish, reorganize, or consolidate areas of responsibility in the office as necessary to fulfil the responsibilities assigned by the Director.

Workgroup for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing

Chapters 442 and 443 of 2024 established the Workgroup for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing to study and make recommendations regarding services, programs, advocacy, outreach, and other efforts to improve the quality of life of individuals who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing. The workgroup's May 2025 [final report](#) recommended, among other things, implementation of a deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing unit within ODHH for three case managers to provide case management and advocacy services to the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing community.

State Expenditures: The bill requires ODHH to include at least three positions to provide specialized case management services to assist deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals. ODHH advises that existing staff are unable to provide case management services required by the bill and that additional staff are needed.

Therefore, ODHH general fund expenditures increase by \$212,509 in fiscal 2027, which accounts for a 90-day start-up delay from the bill's July 1, 2026 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring three case managers to develop individualized plans, coordinate with agencies, ensure culturally competent communication, monitor outcomes, and provide ongoing support to assist deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals. It includes salaries, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Positions	3.0
Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$185,087
Operating Expenses	<u>27,422</u>
Total FY 2027 State Expenditures	\$212,509

Future year expenditures reflect full salaries with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Budget and Management; Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Department of Legislative Services

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jg/jc

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