

HOUSE BILL 866

03

6lr2029

By: ~~Delegates Kaufman and Taveras~~, Taveras, Alston, Bagnall, Cullison, Guzzone, Hill, Hutchinson, S. Johnson, Kipke, Lopez, Martinez, Reilly, Rosenberg, Ross, White Holland, and Woorman

Introduced and read first time: February 4, 2026

Assigned to: Health

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

House action: Adopted

Read second time: February 26, 2026

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 ~~Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Case Management Services~~
3 Workgroup for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing – Extension

4 FOR the purpose of ~~requiring at least a certain number of positions for the Office of the~~
5 ~~Deaf and Hard of Hearing to hire case managers who specialize in helping deaf,~~
6 ~~deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals; requiring the Office to provide case~~
7 ~~management services to deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals~~ extending
8 the deadline for the reporting requirement for the Workgroup for the Deaf,
9 Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing; extending the termination date of the Workgroup;
10 and generally relating to ~~ease management services by the Office of the Deaf and~~
11 ~~Hard of Hearing~~ the Workgroup for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing.

12 ~~BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,~~
13 ~~Article State Government~~
14 ~~Section 9-2402 and 9-2403~~
15 ~~Annotated Code of Maryland~~
16 ~~(2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)~~

17 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
18 Chapter 442 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2024
19 Section 1(a) and (g)

20 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 Chapter 442 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2024
 2 Section 1(h) and 2

3 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
 4 Chapter 443 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2024
 5 Section 1(a) and (g)

6 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
 7 Chapter 443 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2024
 8 Section 1(h) and 2

9 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
 10 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

11 ~~Article State Government~~

12 ~~§ 2402.~~

13 ~~(a) In the Office of the Governor, there is an Office of the Deaf and Hard of~~
 14 ~~Hearing.~~

15 ~~(b) (1) The head of the Office is the Director.~~

16 ~~(2) (i) The Director is appointed by the Governor with the advice and~~
 17 ~~consent of the Senate.~~

18 ~~(ii) The Director serves at the pleasure of the Governor and is~~
 19 ~~responsible directly to the Governor.~~

20 ~~(3) The Director shall be:~~

21 ~~(i) a deaf or hard of hearing person; and~~

22 ~~(ii) knowledgeable and experienced with issues affecting deaf and~~
 23 ~~hard of hearing individuals.~~

24 ~~(4) The Director is entitled to the salary provided in the State budget.~~

25 ~~(c) (1) The Office shall:~~

26 ~~(i) advise the Governor on all matters assigned to the Office; and~~

27 ~~(ii) carry out the Governor's policies on the matters assigned to the~~
 28 ~~Office.~~

29 ~~(2) The Director shall:~~

1 ~~(i) manage the operation of the Office and establish guidelines and~~
2 ~~procedures to promote the orderly and efficient operation of the Office; and~~

3 ~~(ii) adopt regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of this~~
4 ~~subtitle.~~

5 ~~(3) Subject to the provisions of this subtitle, the Director may establish,~~
6 ~~reorganize, or consolidate areas of responsibility in the Office as necessary to fulfill the~~
7 ~~responsibilities assigned by the Director.~~

8 ~~(d) (1) The Office shall be given adequate staff and funding to carry out its~~
9 ~~duties.~~

10 ~~(2) THE OFFICE SHALL INCLUDE AT LEAST THREE POSITIONS TO~~
11 ~~CONDUCT THE DUTIES OF THE OFFICE TO PROVIDE SPECIALIZED CASE~~
12 ~~MANAGEMENT SERVICES TO ASSIST:~~

13 ~~(I) DEAF INDIVIDUALS;~~

14 ~~(II) DEAFBLIND INDIVIDUALS; AND~~

15 ~~(III) HARD-OF-HEARING INDIVIDUALS.~~

16 ~~9-2403.~~

17 ~~(a) The Office shall be responsible for promoting the general welfare of deaf and~~
18 ~~hard of hearing individuals in the State.~~

19 ~~(b) The responsibilities of the Office shall include:~~

20 ~~(1) providing, advocating, and coordinating the adoption of public policies,~~
21 ~~regulations, and programs that will benefit deaf and hard of hearing individuals;~~

22 ~~(2) improving access to communication and to existing services and~~
23 ~~programs for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;~~

24 ~~(3) providing direct services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals as~~
25 ~~appropriate;~~

26 ~~(4) increasing public awareness of the needs and issues affecting deaf and~~
27 ~~hard of hearing individuals;~~

28 ~~(5) working with State and local agencies to ensure access for deaf and hard~~
29 ~~of hearing individuals to safety and emergency services;~~

30 ~~(6) developing a referral service for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;~~

1 ~~(7) serving as an information clearinghouse on the needs and issues~~
 2 ~~affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals;~~

3 ~~(8) working to increase access for deaf and hard of hearing individuals to~~
 4 ~~educational, health, and social opportunities;~~

5 ~~(9) working with private organizations, the federal government, and other~~
 6 ~~units of State government to promote economic development for deaf and hard of hearing~~
 7 ~~individuals;~~

8 ~~(10) working to eliminate the underemployment and unemployment of deaf~~
 9 ~~and hard of hearing individuals;~~

10 ~~(11) providing a network through which services provided by State and~~
 11 ~~federal programs serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals can be channeled;~~

12 ~~(12) promoting compliance with State, local, and federal laws and policies~~
 13 ~~protecting and serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals;~~

14 ~~(13) providing appropriate staff to assist the Board in carrying out its duties;~~
 15 ~~[and]~~

16 ~~(14) providing a nomination process for Board appointments; AND~~

17 ~~(15) IN COORDINATION WITH RELEVANT UNITS OF STATE~~
 18 ~~GOVERNMENT, PROVIDING SPECIALIZED CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES TO DEAF,~~
 19 ~~DEAFBLIND, AND HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS.~~

20 ~~(e) The Office shall hold at least two public town hall meetings each year to~~
 21 ~~receive public comments on:~~

22 ~~(1) the quality of State services and programs affecting deaf and hard of~~
 23 ~~hearing individuals;~~

24 ~~(2) the functions and operations of the Office; and~~

25 ~~(3) any other issues that affect deaf and hard of hearing individuals,~~
 26 ~~including those specified in subsection (b) of this section.~~

27 ~~(d) The Office shall:~~

28 ~~(1) help facilitate the appropriate delivery of State, local, and other public~~
 29 ~~services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals;~~

~~(2) advise other units of State government and the General Assembly on the needs of deaf and hard of hearing individuals;~~

~~(3) subject to appropriations in the State budget, provide any reasonable resources that any other unit of State government requests to serve or assist deaf and hard of hearing individuals; and~~

~~(4) to the greatest extent possible, in order to avoid any duplication of effort, coordinate with other units of the State and the federal government the services provided to deaf and hard of hearing individuals.~~

Chapter 442 of the Acts of 2024

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,

That:

(a) There is a Workgroup for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing.

(g) The Workgroup shall study, assess, and make recommendations regarding:

(1) providing direct and specialized case management services for deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals;

(2) the development and administration of programs that support educational, employment, health, and social opportunities for deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals;

(3) advocacy for policies, programs, and legislative initiatives that address the needs of and issues affecting deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals;

(4) outreach efforts to raise public awareness and foster understanding of the challenges encountered by deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals;

(5) coordination with State agencies and utilization of State resources to provide specialized case management services to meet the needs of deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals;

(6) identification of barriers and gaps in communication access and development of solutions to improve the quality of life of deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals; and

(7) development of activities to enhance civic engagement between deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals and the community.

(h) On or before [June 1, 2025] **DECEMBER 1, 2028**, the Workgroup shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

1 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
2 1, 2024. It shall remain effective for a period of [2] 4 years AND 6 MONTHS and, at the end
3 of [June 30, 2026] DECEMBER 31, 2028, this Act, with no further action required by the
4 General Assembly, shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

5 Chapter 443 of the Acts of 2024

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14 hearing individuals;

15 (3) advocacy for policies, programs, and legislative initiatives that address
16 the needs of and issues affecting deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals;

17 (4) outreach efforts to raise public awareness and foster understanding of
18 the challenges encountered by deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals;

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20 provide specialized case management services to meet the needs of deaf, deafblind, and
21 hard of hearing individuals;

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2 1, 2026.

Approved:

Governor.

Speaker of the House of Delegates.

President of the Senate.