

Martin O'Malley
Governor



Lisa H. Kornberg
Director

Anthony G. Brown
Lt. Governor

**GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING**

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**GOVERNOR O'MALLEY SIGNS LEGISLATION THAT IMPACTS
PEOPLE WITH HEARING LOSS IN MARYLAND**

ANNAPOLIS, MD (May 4, 2010) – Governor Martin O'Malley today joined Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr., House Speaker Michael E. Busch, and Lieutenant Governor Anthony G. Brown, to sign into law two bills that will have a significant impact on Marylanders with hearing loss.

The first requires a place of public accommodation to activate closed captioning on any television in use during regular hours if a person requests the feature be activated. With the signing of this legislation, Maryland becomes the first State in the nation to make it a civil rights violation to refuse to activate closed captioning upon request.

“This is landmark legislation, not only for Marylanders with hearing loss, but for the estimated 17 million Americans with hearing loss around the country,” said Lisa Kornberg, Director of the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH). “By signing this legislation, Governor O'Malley reaffirms his commitment to people with hearing loss in the State and fulfills his promise that there is no such thing as a spare Marylander.”

The second bill amends the definition of “deaf and hard of hearing individuals” within ODHH's statute to include individuals who are deafblind. The bill also increases the roster for the Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing from 16 to 18 members, adding a member with knowledge about deafblind individuals and a representative from the Department of Aging.

In the past year, the O'Malley-Brown Administration has shown tremendous leadership in promoting equal access for Marylanders with hearing loss. In August, in consultation with ODHH and Maryland Relay, Governor O'Malley sent a letter to the entire Maryland delegation to the United States Congress asking them to support H.R. 3101 - the Twenty-first Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2009 and asked the members to work for its swift passage. This bill would ensure that individuals with hearing loss have access to emerging Internet Protocol-based communication and video programming technologies.