



GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

# Monthly Bulletin

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## Legislative Updates

Legislative Session ends on Monday, April 12, but there is still work to be done. If you would like to view a v-log in ASL about the bills below, visit [www.mdad.tv](http://www.mdad.tv).

### SB 68/HB 1501 – State Government - Human Relations - Closed-Captioning Activation Required

Link: <http://mlis.state.md.us/2010rs/bills/sb/sb0068f.pdf>

SB 68 was proposed by ODHH. Initially, this legislation required that TVs located in a place open to the public have closed captioning activated at all times when it is open and the TV is on. During committee, it was amended to require that captions be activated upon request. SB 68 has passed in the Senate and is being heard in the House on March 31 at 1 PM.

Delegate Craig Rice has cross-filed SB 68 in the House – HB 1501 - State Government - Human Relations - Closed-Captioning Activation Required. This bill was

heard in the House Health and Government Operations Committee on Wednesday, March 24th. HB 1501 was submitted WITHOUT the Senate's amendments. Several organizations, including the Howard and Anne Arundel County Commissions on

Disability Issues, the MD Association of the Deaf, and the Collaborative for Communication Access via Captioning, submitted testimony.

### HB 1463—Rachel's Law—Closed Captioning in Movie Theatres

Link: <http://mlis.state.md.us/2010rs/bills/hb/hb1463f.pdf>

This legislation, if passed, would require movie theatres to provide access to closed-captioning technology for deaf and hard of hearing individuals and set the minimum number of showings in which closed-captioning technology is required at a movie theater.

*(Continued on Page 3)*



## April 1st is Census Day

There is an important civic and constitutionally mandated event that will shape our future over the course of the next decade and we need your help. The 2010 Census is coming and we must ensure that every Marylander in every neighborhood, community, village, town, city and county in our State is counted on Census Day: April 1, 2010.

By answering the Census, services and programs such as job training, education, health care and improvements to our infrastructure will be there for Maryland families and communities for years to come.

An accurate Census is extremely important. An undercount of as little as 1.7% or 100,000 of our state's 5.8 million residents translates to a loss of \$1 billion dollars in federal revenue over the next ten years.

To ensure an accurate count, we are working closely with the U.S. Census Bureau, your local government, community organizations and people like you. The success of the Census: it's in our hands Maryland!

Martin O'Malley, Governor



# ODHH Updates and Director's Corner



**ODHH Director  
Lisa H. Kornberg**

Whew! It has been quite a busy month – Maryland is fortunate to have three (3) captioning bills in front of the Legislature this session – and these bills have kept all of us quite busy. (pages 1 & 3) ODHH wants to extend a huge “thanks” to all of the advocacy organizations and constituents that have stepped up to the plate this session – whether it was by writing testimony, testifying in person, calling or writing your legislators, or participating in Legislative Awareness Day and the Virtual Lobbying Day hosted by MDAD. It has been truly inspiring to have so many deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders come together in support of causes that benefit all of us.

While we have been so focused on the legislature here in Maryland, exciting things have been happening in

Washington D.C. as well. There are now 44 co-sponsors for HR 3101, including representation from Maryland. In addition, the Health Care Reform Bill that is being debated has been modified to avoid taxing the purchase of hearing aids (page 4). This is a significant victory and I applaud the advocacy organizations for responding quickly and efficiently so our voice could be heard.

This is the beginning of many new things to come and I am excited to part of the change and to be representing Governor O'Malley and Lt. Governor Brown, two individuals deeply committed to ensuring equal access for all.

Be well,

*Lisa*

## Advisory Council Updates

On March 2, the Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MACDHH) held its first quarterly meeting for 2010. Topics discussed were having effective subcommittee meetings, legislative updates, and a strategic plan for the council.

In March, MACDHH welcomed its newest member, Shane Feldman, who was nominated on March 15 for a three-year term as a representative of Maryland Association of the Deaf. The Senate later approved the nomination.

MACDHH is still seeking new members. Individuals interested in being considered for appointment to

the Council should send a cover letter with their resume and a completed biographical information form (<http://www.odhh.maryland.gov/pdfs/CVFormAppointmentApplication.pdf>) to:

Honorable Martin O'Malley  
Governor's Appointments Office  
State House  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The next ODHH Advisory Council Meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 8, 2010 at the Maryland Department of Transportation Headquarters in Hanover, MD.

## MAT Program Adds Jitterbug to Wireless Pilot

What if there was a cell phone that is easy to use by people who are hard of hearing or have vision loss? Now, there is! Maryland Relay and Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) are excited to announce a new partnership with **Jitterbug**, as we roll-out the second phase of our Wireless Pilot Program in April, 2010.

Jitterbug offers independence for those who may have trouble using a standard cell phone. With the highest hearing aid compatibility rating (M4/T4), and free services such as voice dialing and operator assistance available, the Jitterbug will have a positive impact on people with vision and/or hearing loss.

Approved MAT customers will receive a free Jitterbug phone and are responsible for paying any monthly wireless fees (service is provided over Verizon's wireless network). Jitterbug never requires any credit checks, deposits, or contracts, and the activation fee is waived for MAT program customers.

View all service rates at [www.jitterbug.com/Rateplans](http://www.jitterbug.com/Rateplans) and find a plan that works for you. For more information, or to receive a MAT application, please contact Maryland Relay Customer Service at 800-552-7724 (V/TTY) or email [more-info@mdrelay.org](mailto:more-info@mdrelay.org).



# Legislative Updates (cont.)

*(Continued from page 1)*

The hearing was held on March 23 at 1 PM in front of the House Economic Matters Committee.

## **SB 102/HB 1086 - Election Law – Campaign Advertisements – Closed Captioning**

Link: <http://mlis.state.md.us/2010rs/bills/sb/sb0102f.pdf> (Senate) and <http://mlis.state.md.us/2010rs/bills/hb/hb1086f.pdf> (House)

This legislation will require captioning on campaign advertisements distributed via broadcast TV, cable TV, and on the Internet. It was cross-filed in the House. The hearing in the House was on March 16, 2010 at 1 PM in the Ways and Means Committee.

The hearing in the Senate was on February 4, 2010 in front of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee. Both hearings went very well.

For more information, check out this Frederick Post article <http://www.fredericknewspost.com/sections/news/display.htm?storyid=102547>.

## **SB 79 – ODHH Responsibilities**

Link: <http://mlis.state.md.us/2010rs/bills/sb/sb0079t.pdf>

This legislation will amend the definition of “deaf and hard of hearing individuals” within our statute to include individuals who are deafblind. The changes

will also change the name of the Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to the Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and increase the roster for the Council from 16 to 18 members, adding a member with knowledge about deafblind individuals and a representative from the Department of Aging .

This bill was passed by the Senate and will be heard on March 31 at 1 PM in the House Health and Government Operations Committee.

## **OUR WORK IS NOT DONE!**

On March 24th, the Maryland Association of the Deaf hosted a Virtual Legislative Day, where its members called and wrote to their representatives urging them to pass these bills. Please continue to call, e-mail, and meet with your legislators and let them know that the time for communication access in Maryland is NOW. If you need help getting started, there are great sample letters on the MDAD website at [www.mdad.tv](http://www.mdad.tv).



## McDaniel Deaf Ed. Students Visit Dominican Republic

As you may know, McDaniel College offers a Master of Science program in Deaf Education. Philosophically, the program views deaf students from a bilingual perspective.

For graduates, that translates into a genuine acceptance of and respect for the language and culture of deaf people. To further this mission, students in the Deaf Education Graduate Program at McDaniel College, along with Program Coordinator Dr. Mark Rust, traveled to the Dominican Republic to learn about the educational and Life Experiences of the Deaf. According to the Program’s website, most deaf

Dominican children never receive more than three years of schooling, if they receive any at all.

The students were in the Dominican Republic from March

12-March 20, Their itinerary included visits to the deaf church, teaching at Dominican schools, presenting workshops to teachers, and socializing with the Dominican



Deaf community. Among the schools they visited were Sabana Perdida school, one of the poorest areas of Santo Domingo and the National Deaf School in Santo Domingo.

The participants taught lessons at the different schools they visited. These lessons focused on hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes.

If you would like to read more about the schools visited and other aspects of the trip, visit Dr. Rust’s blog at <http://drmmrust.wordpress.com/>.



## Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

217 East Redwood Street, Suite 1300  
Baltimore, MD 21202

Voice: 410-767-6290 • TTY: 410-767-7756

VP: 443-453-5954 • Fax: 410-333-1016

Website: [odhh.maryland.gov](http://odhh.maryland.gov)

Twitter: [twitter.com/mdodhh](https://twitter.com/mdodhh)

**Martin O'Malley**  
Governor

**Anthony G. Brown**  
Lieutenant Governor

**Lisa H. Kornberg**  
Director

**Julie Anne Schafer, Esq.**  
Editor

# ODHH on the Move

## April 2010

*Sine Die (Last Day of Session)*

Monday, April 12, 11:59 PM

State House

Annapolis, MD

*Deaf Professional Brown Bag Lunch*

Friday, April 16, 12 PM-2 PM

Arundel Lodge, Inc.

Edgewater, MD

*Cumberland Veteran Muster*

Saturday, April 24, 9 AM - 12 PM

Location TBA

Cumberland, MD



## May 2010

*Cecil County Town Hall Meeting*

Thursday, May 6, 6 PM - 8 PM

CCPL - Perryville Branch

Perryville, MD

*Deafnet Deaf Awareness Day*

Friday, May 14, 10 AM - 4 PM

Valley Mall

Hagerstown, MD



\*\* Please note that ODHH will be closed on May 28 and May 31 for Service Reduction Days and in observance of Memorial Day\*\*

## Healthcare Reform and You

Following the passage of Healthcare reform, Governor O'Malley issued the following statement:

*"Under President Obama's leadership, finally, we will begin to control the rising cost of healthcare in America, improve the ability of all Americans to take their children to a doctor, and put the American people back in control of their healthcare decisions.*

*"These reforms ensure that for every American family no person can be turned away by insurance companies due to a pre-existing health condition and provide immediate tax relief for small businesses throughout our country.*

*In Maryland, these national reforms will build on our efforts to expand healthcare to more Marylanders, especially our children, close the prescription drug 'donut hole' for our seniors, and crack down on fraud, waste and abuse. This legislation will also help bring down costs for Maryland taxpayers and businesses by reducing the hidden tax of uncompensated care."*

Initially, the health care reform package included

language that would result in a tax of hearing aids. The House of Representatives adopted a Health Reform Reconciliation Bill to amend the Senate's overall health reform bill which the House also adopted verbatim as part of the process. During final negotiations, the FDA Class I medical device tax exemption was dropped; however, a specific hearing aid exemption that was included in the legislation days earlier was retained. This will exempt hearing aids from the medical device tax that will be imposed on almost all other devices not sold at "retail." The legislation is still being debated, but this is very promising news for people with hearing loss.

This success is the direct result of the hard work of advocacy groups, the Hearing Loss Association of America in particular, and Senators willing to organize opposition to the hearing aid tax. For more information, visit <http://hlaa-advocacy.blogspot.com/>.



The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is working to make sure that important tax information reaches the deaf community.

During the 2010 tax season, the IRS is adding new ASL PSAs to its series entitled, "Tax Tips", with open captions and voice over.

Please check back often for new video updates. You can view the videos on the IRS' YouTube ASL Channel at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/IRSVideosASL>.