

**Date:** April 10, 2025 – 6pm – 7pm

**Attended:** Usherla, Delegate Aaron Kaufman, Jacob (MDAD), Heidi (MDAD), and Dr. Leo

**Topic:** History of DDBHH Workgroup Bill

**Presenter:** Delegate Aaron Kaufman

- Presented briefly about the CN bill after learning of some of the struggles of DB people. Original goal was to have a CN program like in other states.
- Due to the budget, the legislators settled with the DDBHH Workgroup.
- “Nothing about us without us” philosophy – would be inappropriate to speak for the DB community. They face hardships that aren’t often thought of by others like with transportation.
- Legislators are eager to see the report from the DDBHH workgroup and their concrete recommendations.
- Many DB people came to his office and shared their barriers and experiences.
- Want to hear recommendations for how DB people can be a part of the community integration – even after the passing of the ADA law that DB and Deaf communities are still experiencing barriers.
- Leo asked Delegate Kaufman for his opinion if case mgmt. services should be provided by an independent state commission, be provided by another state agency OR have ODHH do this? His feedback was ODHH had limited staff (3 staff). He’d love to see if ODHH take more of a role but not possible due to a small office, they’re focused on the licensing of interpreters. If ODHH were to take this on, then need to overcome the resistance, increase the budget, etc. Maybe DOH or DORS should take this. He wanted ODHH to run the CN program but experienced resistance.
- Leo followed up with his question was based from a recent virtual town hall where there have been a variety of opinions – commission, a state agency (e.g. DOH or D of DA) and ODHH. Speaking to the heads of DOH and D of DA would be helpful.
- When the appropriations committee was willing to give a PIN (staff person) to ODHH, there was resistance (for case mgmt. services). When proposing new work, many people have excuses not to do new things.
- Delegate Kaufman heard from DB people, to try to arrange for transportation for them to come (subsidize transportation) OR a Zoom option. DOH has a large budget, maybe they can take on some of the workgroup recommendations.

- Gov. O'Malley considered briefly in closing ODHH and putting it under the D of DA but there was pushback from the Deaf community (not seeing deafness as a disability).
- Reiterated the scope and deadlines of the workgroup bill.
- Jacob suggested that MDAD would like to take over from the workgroup and finish up with any recommendations / report. His chief of staff will look at the statute. The workgroup may not have to stop by June 1<sup>st</sup> but can continue the work.
- Leo suggested the workgroup could share the report with MDAD.
- Delegate Kaufman quickly reviewed the statute – the report is due by June 1, 2025 with recommendations to the Gen Assembly. The workgroup can continue until July 2026.
- Part of the reason the commission was NOT implemented was because the “state is broke.” If there are federal cuts to Medicaid, it will then affect the state’s budget as well making it more problematic for setting up a commission.

## **Recommendations**

1. Share the Workgroup report with MDAD.
2. Consider all options for the provision of case mgmt. services (the heart of the need of the bill) – a state commission, a state agency (like DOH), and ODHH.