

DRAFT

§ 9-2404. Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MACDHH) - June 6, 2025 (Crownsville, MD)

MACDHH Council Members Present: Chair: Norma Moran, Vice Chair: Mark Tesoro

Paige Bradford, Lauren Whiteman, Yolanda Dockery, Cleveland L. Horton II, Allegra Hollins, Dianna Yamada, Cassidy Brooks Flagg, Edwin Martinez, Dr. Daniel Koo, Bo Byun, Maia Williams, Kathleen Farnsworth Kramer, John Serrano,

Absent: Tony Bridges, Kristen Patterson,

Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GODHH) Staff Members: Director Usherla DeBerry, Tanea Brown, and Diamon Halliburton.

Call to order: 2:05 PM

Meeting Minutes: Minutes from the March 7, 2025 meeting were approved.

Chair Norma Moran's Report:

- Norma Moran reiterated her intent to resign as Chair after this meeting. Statutory requirement: The Chair must be a Deaf Maryland citizen appointed by the Governor. There are no immediate volunteers. If a vacancy persists, the Vice-Chair will preside ad interim.

Vice Chair's Report:

- None

GODHH Director Usherla DeBerry's Report:

- Regarding Legislative and policy updates: House Bill 1363 (Open Captioned Movies), the proposed screen expansion to decrease the number of screens needed to trigger the captioning law. The bill failed for the 2025 session but will be reintroduced in 2026.
- LEAD-K Leadership Summit: The Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) Leadership Summit was held as a private national strategy meeting in Bethesda. The primary goal of the summit was to develop a plan for a federal LEAD-K mandate that would align language acquisition standards for Deaf children across all states.
- Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Work Group: The final report from this work group was submitted to the Senate President, House Speaker, and the Attorney General. The report recommends the creation of a Case Management Unit housed within the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH). This proposed unit would include, at minimum, a supervisor, a case manager, and a DeafBlind advocate. The

recommendation was made in lieu of forming a new independent commission, due to the current state budget deficit.

- Behavioral Health CLCSP Committee: The committee is in the process of reevaluating its name to better reflect diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) concerns. Director DeBerry serves as co-chair and is helping to lead efforts that focus on providing culturally appropriate access to behavioral health resources for diverse communities.
- State Board of Sign Language Interpreters (SBSLI) Regulations: The proposed regulations have been posted in the Maryland Register for public comment. These regulations address licensure requirements, the accumulation of Continuing Education Units (CEUs), and compensation guidelines for religious interpreting. The regulations are scheduled to take effect on January 1, 2026.
- Data Collection Initiative: State departments have been asked to submit any available data or statistics regarding Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind constituents. These departmental submissions will help inform service planning and identify areas for improvement.
- Mandatory State Trainings: Staff members from the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) have completed the "Workplace Bullying" training module as part of the state's mandatory training requirements.
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GODHH Outreach Interpreter Manager Tanéa Brown Report:

- NIC/BEI Certification Roundtables: Hybrid sessions every Tuesday (virtual) & Saturday (in-person at Laurel & Ellicott City libraries). One attendee has been newly certified.
- Mental-Health & Religious Interpreting Workshops: The co-facilitators are Esther Lemon & Corey Davis. CEU processing underway; May 31 event postponed for logistics.
- Public-Comment Awareness: session yielded comments (up from) on
- SBSLI religious-interpreting clause.
- Lunch-and-Learn ASL Classes: Offered to state employees in-house.
- Targeted Support Tracks: Developing mentorship for Deaf interpreters, DeafBlind interpreters, and BIPOC interpreters to boost marginalised licensure rates.
- September Communication-Access Symposium: Co-sponsored with TAM & Deaf Culture Digital Library. Presenters & volunteers are welcome to sign up.

GODHH Administrative Assistant Report:

- The Joint Chairman's Report (JCR) due on June 16, 2025 has been completed.

Report from Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Workgroup Chair Dr. Leo Yates:

- Dr. Leo Yates, the Deaf and DeafBlind Specialist for the Division of Rehabilitative Services (DORS) in Maryland, also chairs the state's Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Work Group. This group, in coordination with the Maryland General Assembly, has been conducting a needs assessment focused on better supporting these communities through the potential establishment of a state commission. The goal is to improve case management and support for co-navigators and Support Service Providers (SSPs) assisting Deaf and DeafBlind individuals. Due to a significant state budget deficit,

the full commission's development has been postponed, and a smaller unit under the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) was proposed instead. The unit would include a case manager, a supervisor, and a DeafBlind advocate responsible for ensuring service delivery, coordination with agencies, and improving referrals and communication. To ensure long-term stability, an amendment to Maryland's COMAR regulations was suggested to formally establish the unit within ODHH and safeguard services for Deaf and DeafBlind populations. The report with these recommendations was submitted to the General Assembly on June 1.

Special Topic: Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP) - Presented by James Whitney

Program Architecture

1. The program is a federally funded partner under the State Assistive Technology (AT) Act and is one of several designated entities across the country.
2. It serves individuals of all ages and disabilities across the state of Maryland. The main office is located near Morgan State University, with additional satellite libraries hosted at Centers for Independent Living.
3. Core Services Include:
 - Free consultations are available both virtually and in person to help individuals identify suitable assistive technology (AT).
 - A short-term device loan program allows users to try equipment for a set number of days before committing to a purchase. Shipping and return labels are provided.
 - The program operates under a strict no-sales, neutral approach to ensure objective device recommendations.
 - The Reuse Program accepts donated AT and redistributes it at no cost through an online inventory system.
 - The Financial Loan Program offers flexible, low-interest loans for:
 - General AT purchases up to a specified amount.
 - Home modifications up to a certain limit.
 - Vehicle modifications, with similar financial flexibility.
4. New Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HoH) Inventory: Through a recent grant, the program has acquired advanced assistive devices such as Hearview captioning glasses, Bellman & Symfon alerting kits, SquareGlow systems, and adaptive microphones to better serve Deaf and HoH users.
5. Scope Limitations: The program does not provide durable medical equipment (DME), such as wheelchairs or walkers. Instead, it refers individuals to the Maryland Department

of Aging's DME Re-Use Warehouse.

6. Examples of Assistive Technology Categories:

- Daily living aids including kitchen tools and grooming devices.
- Computer access supports such as eye-tracking software, JAWS screen reader, Glean note-taking app, and Inspiration mind mapping tool.
- Executive function tools like smart calendars and adaptive cookware.
- Leisure technologies including adaptive gaming controllers and switch-activated toys.

7. Ethical and Practical Impact: The program significantly promotes independence and social connection for users. It also helps reduce safety risks, such as failures in carbon monoxide detectors, as identified by the Council.

Old Business

- Sole item – unresolved election of new Council Chair.

New Buisness

- Maryland School for the Deaf (Superintendent John Serrano): 22 seniors graduated on May 30, 2025 with diverse post-secondary placements (Gallaudet, RIT, Towson, UMD, Daniel College).
- Promotions K→1st grade. The last day of school is June 11 due to weather make-ups.
- Maryland Deaf Access Committee (Alcoholics Anonymous): Maintains aa.org & deafa.org meeting databases. There are ASL video podcasts on AA Grapevine and an upcoming tri-lingual Deaf AA Forum.
- Dept. of Housing & Community Development (Allegra Hollins): Expanding internal data capture for DDBHH accommodation requests. Lyft in-app ASL tutorial example praised as corporate best practice.
- MCCR (Maryland Commission on Civil Rights): Norma reminded public of free discrimination investigation services. Anybody who might have experienced any type of discrimination or violation of their rights, they can reach out to MCCR for support..
- Bo Byun: Reported international accessibility observations: Korean museums with built-in interpreters, Deaf-space principles, and real-time TV interpreters).

Announcements

- None.