

**FINAL**

§ 9-2404. Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MACDHH) - December 5, 2025 (VIRTUAL)

# **Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MACDHH)**

## **Virtual Meeting**

**December 5, 2025**

### **Council Members Present**

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, and John Serrano.

### **Council Members Absent**

N/A

### **Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GODHH) Staff Present**

Director Usherla DeBerry, Tanéa Brown, and Diamon Halliburton.

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 2:04 PM.

### **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the September 12, 2025 meeting were approved.

### **Chair's Report (Interim)**

The Chair thanked the council and GODHH staff for their continued commitment to advocacy and accessibility for individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind, Deaf Disabled, Hard of Hearing, and others with communication access needs.

The Chair highlighted the mission of GODHH to promote equality and accessibility through expertise and collaboration. Council members play a vital role in advising on programs and policies, reviewing statewide activities, fostering partnerships, and identifying ways to improve access to facilities and services throughout Maryland.

The Chair expressed appreciation for the dedication, participation, and expertise of council members and staff, emphasizing that the work is both challenging and essential.

## **Vice Chair's Report**

No report.

## **Director's Report**

See Director's updates.

## **GODHH Outreach Interpreter Manager Report**

Presented by Tanéa Brown

Updates included:

- SBSLI public comment period (May–June 2025) and extension.
- SBSLI website updates.
- SBSLI license application submitted through the OneStop Portal.
- NIC/BEI Study Table Program (11-month initiative).
- Communication Accessibility Summit in partnership with TAM and DCDL.
- ASL and Deaf Culture Trivia initiative.
- Lunch and Learn ASL Program.

## **GODHH Administrative Assistant Report**

Updates included:

- Submission of the 2023 Annual Report.
- Progress toward completing the 2024 and 2025 Annual Reports.
- Attendance at the MSRP Financial House Webinar.
- Attendance at the Prince George's County Executive Candidates Forum.

## **Special Presentation**

### **Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM)**

## **Presenter: David Bahar, Executive Director**

### **Agency Overview**

David Bahar provided an overview of Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM), which operates under the Maryland Department of Disabilities, led by Secretary Carol Beatty.

Maryland remains one of the few states with a standalone cabinet-level Department of Disabilities, providing focused leadership and direct access for Marylanders with disabilities.

### **Maryland Relay Program**

Maryland Relay, accessed through 711, offers:

- Traditional TTY
- Captioned Telephone (CapTel)
- Relay Conference Captioning (RCC)
- Spanish Relay
- Speech-to-Speech (STS)
- Video-Assisted Services (VATS)

Web-based services include:

- IP CTS
- IP Relay
- Video Relay Service (VRS)

Additional information is available at [marylandrelay.org](http://marylandrelay.org).

### **Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT)**

The MAT program provides:

- Telecommunications equipment
- Assessments
- Training
- Ongoing technical support

Eligible participants include Maryland residents with disabilities affecting communication access, including Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, cognitive, speech, auditory processing, and Alzheimer's-related disabilities.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

Applicants must:

- Be Maryland residents
- Meet income requirements (40% or below the federal poverty level based on household size)
- Provide disability verification from a qualified professional

## **Communication Facilitator Program**

The Communication Facilitator (CF) Program currently serves DeafBlind individuals by providing in-person communication support during relay calls and other telecommunications interactions.

The program continues to grow and may expand to additional communication modalities in the future.

## **Technology and Equipment Support**

MAT offers loaned equipment including:

- iPhones
- Android devices
- Captioned telephones

The program also provides warranties, technical support, and referrals to the Maryland Technology Assistance Program (MDTAP) when appropriate.

## **Future Technology Planning**

TAM discussed the transition from TTY technology toward Real-Time Text (RTT).

RTT offers:

- Real-time typed communication
- Speech-to-text integration
- Potential integration with 911 emergency systems

Maryland is actively exploring RTT implementation, similar to systems already operating in states such as Texas and Indiana.

## **Conclusion**

Council members thanked Mr. Bahar for an informative presentation and discussion regarding future telecommunications accessibility initiatives.

## **Old Business**

None.

# New Business

## Private Agency Update

### Maia Williams

Maia Williams provided an update regarding advocacy efforts through the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).

Current advocacy focuses on expanding the federal definition of professional programs and professional students following the passage of HR1, known as the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," which reduced loan limits for graduate and professional students.

The objective is to ensure students pursuing audiology, speech-language pathology, and related allied health professions remain eligible for adequate financial support, helping address workforce shortages.

Ms. Williams indicated she would share future opportunities for advocacy engagement as they become available.

The Chair thanked Ms. Williams for her efforts and advocacy.

## Director's Updates

Director Usherla DeBerry provided updates on:

- Deaf Culture Digital Library legislation and funding.
- Meetings with the DDBHH Maryland Workgroup.
- Human Trafficking Awareness Event scheduled for January 6.
- Completion of CLAS Reviews in Anne Arundel, Carroll, Calvert, and Somerset Counties.
- Attendance at the National Black Deaf Advocates Conference.
- Participation in Meta Co-Design sessions.
- Participation in the Interagency Disabilities Board State Disability Plan Review process.
- Distribution of the GODHH Department and Agency Transition Memo.
- Presentation for a leadership course within an MPA program.
- Departmental proposal submissions.
- Legislative Awareness and Awards Day.
- Virtual town halls.
- Cultural Linguistic and Competency Committee updates.
- Staffing and budget updates.
- Strategic goals and plans for the next two years.
- Weekly statewide briefings.

Director DeBerry concluded by thanking community members, parents, allies, sister agencies, state partners, SBSLI participants, the DDBHH Workgroup, MACDHH members, past and current GODHH staff, the Governor's Office, Lieutenant Governor's Office, Governor and First Lady, and all partners supporting accessibility throughout Maryland.

## **Announcements**

### **Maryland Deaf Access Committee**

Kathleen Kramer announced the upcoming Deaf Special Forum scheduled for January 17, 2026.

Theme:

Alcoholics Anonymous

The forum will include interpretation in:

- ASL
- English
- French
- Spanish
- LSQ
- LSM

Additional information and registration materials will be distributed.

### **Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)**

Dr. Paige Bradford reported that MSDE is developing eligibility checklists for all 14 IDEA disability categories.

Priority categories for the council include:

- Deaf
- Hard of Hearing
- DeafBlind

Implementation will occur in phases over three years, accompanied by statewide training.

### **Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD)**

John Serrano reported that the Career and Technical Education Building renovation is nearing completion.

The updated facility will include:

- Culinary Arts
- Automotive Technology
- STEM Programs
- Gardening
- Drama

The anticipated reopening is scheduled for early 2026.

The facility will also support partnerships with businesses and community organizations to expand student opportunities.

## **Deaf Seniors of America Conference**

An announcement was shared regarding the Deaf Seniors of America 2027 Conference.

Conference information and registration materials will be distributed electronically to interested participants.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 3:50 PM.