



GOVERNOR'S COORDINATING OFFICES

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES • SERVICE & VOLUNTEERISM • PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT
CRIME CONTROL & PREVENTION • SMALL, MINORITY & WOMEN BUSINESS AFFAIRS
CHILDREN • GRANTS • DEAF & HARD OF HEARING

MARYLAND GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF DIRECTOR KELBY BRICK, ESQ., CDI

FISCAL YEAR 2020 OPERATING BUDGET HEARINGS

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE
SENATE BUDGET & TAXATION COMMITTEE
Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair
February 22, 2019**

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
Delegate Kirill Reznik, Chair
Delegate Geraldine Valentino-Smith, Vice Chair
February 25, 2019**

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee, my name is Kelby Brick and I am the Director of the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

I would like to thank our legislative analyst Anne Wagner for her work on reviewing our fiscal year '20 spending plan. I am pleased that her analysis concurs with the Governor's allowance.

As noted in the analysis, we are responsible for providing, advocating, and coordinating the adoption of public policies, regulations, and programs that would benefit the 1.2 million Deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Maryland. This past year was another significant year for our office as there has been tremendous growth in jobs and small businesses, expanded access to emergency services through text-to-911, and increased hearing aid coverage through Maryland Medicaid. Our office remains committed to making Maryland a better place to live, work, raise a family, and retire. I can elaborate further on the details at the committee's request.

Update page 8 of the Analysis

As the analysis points out, there are still no licensure requirements for sign language interpreters in Maryland. The Governor's Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing is still developing its policy framework on this issue and welcomes the opportunity to work with all, including the state legislature, on addressing this pressing issue. I would like to outline our ongoing efforts to define minimum standards, including encouraging State agencies to use certified deaf interpreters now used in State emergency broadcasts, public meetings, and meetings involving DeafBlind constituents.

The office continually gathers information on a variety of alternatives for assessing and ensuring interpreting quality in Maryland in addition to the basic Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). RID sets the minimum interpreting standards for certification. In accordance with Governor Hogan's goal to improve state efficiency, we conduct research on ways to improve the efficiency and quality of interpreting services within State departments and agencies, such as centralizing interpreting services. Our office has increased quality and efficiency by streamlining interpreting processes into one primary interpreting agency and exclusively contracting with qualified and certified interpreters for State functions.

As required by State and federal law, private and public entities must provide qualified interpreters and other accommodations for Deaf and hard of hearing constituents. Our office always advises entities to use interpreters who are RID certified. Certification is extremely important to prevent entities from liability and miscommunication between both parties. Entities have the right to seek different bids from different agencies for the interpreting job. To view a listing of agencies in Maryland, please see: <http://odhh.maryland.gov/directory/#interpretingcommunication-access>. The office continues to provide assistance with RID to improve the certification process, especially related to the process for Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs). We have promoted the growth and use of CDIs in particular, ensuring that these are used in State emergency broadcasts, official public meetings, and meetings that involve DeafBlind constituents.

To ensure equitable communication and language accessibility for all Deaf and hard of hearing constituents in Maryland, the office monitors reports of fraudulent practices involving unqualified sign language interpreters and refers complaints to the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights as such situations arise.

The Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing continues to work extensively with stakeholders to gather information and receive feedback on solutions to address fraudulent and unqualified sign language interpreters in Maryland. We have held meetings and forums with business owners, interpreters, sign language agencies, constituents, and government officials on this subject in an effort to be a resource on the various policies to rectify the problem.

I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I will gladly answer any questions that committee members may have of me.