

Wes Moore
Governor

Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor

Usherla DeBerry
Director



**FISCAL YEAR 2026 OPERATING BUDGET TESTIMONY
MARYLAND GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING**

DIRECTOR USHERLA DEBERRY, Ed.S.

HOUSE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE

**Delegate Emily Shetty, Chair
Delegate Dana Jones, Vice Chair
February 5, 2024**

SENATE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE

**Senator Cory V. McCray
February 6, 2024**

Greetings Chair and distinguished members of the committee, it is my honor to be here on behalf of the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing as its Director. It is truly a privilege to work with the Moore-Miller administration to support Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community in Maryland.

I would like to thank our Legislative Analyst Nathaly Andrade for her work with our office, and her understanding of what we do for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community. I am very grateful for my hardworking team, Diamon Halliburton, Tanéa Brown, and Laura Lugar.

This fiscal year has been about maintaining communication with the Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing Community. We did this through Town Hall meetings with and without our advisory board, the Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Additionally, we have helped keep the community informed on the coming licensure of interpreters with the State Board of Sign Language Interpreter meetings. More recently ODDH has helped facilitate the Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing Maryland Workgroup.

Page 5 Personnel Data:

ODHH should comment on the status of the vacant positions, including the agency's current recruitment efforts, and any challenges it may be facing in filling these roles.

Under my leadership, the office is currently undergoing a reorganization. The office has four vacant positions of which two are in the process of being filled. The Deputy Director and Compliance Officer positions are at the final interview stage. The remaining vacancies are the Policy Manager and Public Relations positions. These positions will be actively recruited once the Deputy Director and Compliance Officer positions are filled.

Page 9 Operating Budget Recommended Actions:

The ODHH concurs with the DLS recommended actions.