

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2022 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

House Bill 612

(Delegate Lisanti, *et al.*)

Health and Government Operations

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing - Responsibilities and Reporting

This bill requires the Governor’s Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) to maintain an estimate of the number of deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) individuals in the State and include the current estimate in the annual report submitted to the Governor and the General Assembly. ODHH must also identify and facilitate opportunities for underinsured individuals to gain equal and affordable access to hearing aids.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill’s requirements can be handled with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: ODHH was established to promote the general welfare of DHH individuals in the State, and must:

- provide, advocate, and coordinate the adoption of public policies, regulations, and programs that will benefit DHH individuals;
- improve access to communication and to existing services and programs for DHH individuals;

- provide direct services to DHH individuals, as appropriate;
- increase public awareness of the needs and issues affecting DHH individuals;
- work with State and local agencies to ensure access for DHH individuals to safety and emergency services;
- develop a referral service for DHH individuals;
- serve as an information clearinghouse on the needs and issues affecting DHH individuals;
- increase access for DHH individuals to educational, health, and social opportunities;
- work with private organizations, the federal government, and other units of State government to promote economic development for DHH individuals;
- work to eliminate the underemployment and unemployment of DHH individuals;
- provide a network through which services provided by State and federal programs serving DHH individuals can be channeled; and
- promote compliance with State, local, and federal laws and policies protecting and serving DHH individuals.

The Director of OHDD must submit an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly on (1) the activities of the office; (2) the status of programs and services facilitated by the office; (3) statistics on compliance with State and federal laws related to DHH individuals; and (4) recommendations for improved delivery of services for DHH individuals.

Additional Comments: OHDD advises there are more than [1.2 million](#) DHH individuals in Maryland. The most recent year the OHDD annual report is available is for [fiscal 2019](#).

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland School for the Deaf; Maryland Department of Disabilities; Maryland Department of Health; Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 24, 2022
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