

HOUSE BILL 612

P1

2lr2909

By: **Delegates Lisanti, Jalisi, Johnson, and Reilly**

Introduced and read first time: January 31, 2022

Assigned to: Health and Government Operations

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Responsibilities and Reporting**

3 FOR the purpose of altering the responsibilities of the Office of the Deaf and Hard of
4 Hearing to include maintaining a certain estimate and identifying and facilitating
5 certain opportunities; requiring the Office to include a certain estimate in its annual
6 report; and generally relating to the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

7 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
8 Article – State Government
9 Section 9–2403 and 9–2407
10 Annotated Code of Maryland
11 (2021 Replacement Volume)

12 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
13 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

14 **Article – State Government**

15 9–2403.

16 (a) The Office shall be responsible for promoting the general welfare of deaf and
17 hard of hearing individuals in the State.

18 (b) The responsibilities of the Office shall include:

19 **(1) MAINTAINING AN ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF DEAF AND HARD**
20 **OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE;**

21 **[(1)] (2)** providing, advocating, and coordinating the adoption of public
22 policies, regulations, and programs that will benefit deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 [(2)] (3) improving access to communication and to existing services and
2 programs for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

3 [(3)] (4) providing direct services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals
4 as appropriate;

5 [(4)] (5) increasing public awareness of the needs and issues affecting
6 deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

7 [(5)] (6) working with State and local agencies to ensure access for deaf
8 and hard of hearing individuals to safety and emergency services;

9 [(6)] (7) developing a referral service for deaf and hard of hearing
10 individuals;

11 [(7)] (8) serving as an information clearinghouse on the needs and issues
12 affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

13 [(8)] (9) working to increase access for deaf and hard of hearing
14 individuals to educational, health, and social opportunities, **INCLUDING IDENTIFYING**
15 **AND FACILITATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNDERINSURED INDIVIDUALS TO GAIN**
16 **EQUAL AND AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO HEARING AIDS;**

17 [(9)] (10) working with private organizations, the federal government, and
18 other units of State government to promote economic development for deaf and hard of
19 hearing individuals;

20 [(10)] (11) working to eliminate the underemployment and unemployment
21 of deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

22 [(11)] (12) providing a network through which services provided by State
23 and federal programs serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals can be channeled; and

24 [(12)] (13) promoting compliance with State, local, and federal laws and
25 policies protecting and serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

26 (c) The Office shall hold at least two public town hall meetings each year to
27 receive public comments on:

28 (1) the quality of State services and programs affecting deaf and hard of
29 hearing individuals;

30 (2) the functions and operations of the Office; and

31 (3) any other issues that affect deaf and hard of hearing individuals,

1 including those specified in subsection (b) of this section.

2 (d) The Office shall:

3 (1) help facilitate the appropriate delivery of State, local, and other public
4 services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

5 (2) advise other units of State government and the General Assembly on
6 the needs of deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

7 (3) subject to appropriations in the State budget, provide any reasonable
8 resources that any other unit of State government requests to serve or assist deaf and hard
9 of hearing individuals; and

10 (4) to the greatest extent possible, in order to avoid any duplication of
11 effort, coordinate with other units of the State and the federal government the services
12 provided to deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

13 9–2407.

14 On or before January 1, 2002, and annually thereafter, the Director shall submit to
15 the Governor and, in accordance with § 2–1257 of this article, to the members of the General
16 Assembly, a report on:

17 **(1) THE OFFICE’S CURRENT ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF DEAF OR**
18 **HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE;**

19 **[(1)] (2)** the activities of the Office;

20 **[(2)] (3)** the status of programs and services facilitated by the Office;

21 **[(3)] (4)** statistics on compliance with State and federal laws related to
22 deaf and hard of hearing individuals; and

23 **[(4)] (5)** recommendations for improved delivery of services for deaf and
24 hard of hearing individuals.

25 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
26 October 1, 2022.