



CHANGING
Maryland
for the Better

Governor's Office of the
Deaf & Hard of Hearing

ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 2016

July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016



Larry Hogan
Governor



Boyd K. Rutherford
Lt. Governor



Kelby Brick
Director

FY2016 Annual Report

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A Message from the Governor



Larry Hogan
Governor

Maryland State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-974-3901

Dear Constituents,

I am pleased to share with you the 2016 Annual Report prepared by the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Our administration is committed to making Maryland a better place to live, work, raise a family, and retire. The Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is a vital part of this important mission, as it works each day to improve quality of life for all Marylanders, including the state's more than 1.2 million Deaf and hard of hearing citizens.

During the 2016 legislative session, I was proud to sign four bills that support Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders. I look forward to watching the Office continue to expand opportunities, from improving telecommunications services to making it easier for Deaf and hard of hearing business owners to succeed and thrive in our growing economy.

Together, we will change Maryland for the better.

Sincerely,



Larry Hogan
Governor

A Message from the Director



Kelby Brick, Esq., CDI
Director

Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
100 Community Place
Crownsville, Maryland 21032
443-453-5761
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Dear Friends,

The Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is pleased to present our Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2016.

This past year was certainly full of many transitions. When I first became Director in July 2015, we had no staff and the office's facility was undergoing renovations. After hiring a full staff of highly skilled and motivated individuals, we started to pick up on the momentum.

In the Spring of 2016, Governor Hogan moved all eight of his Coordinating Offices to Crownsville in an effort to increase government efficiency and collaboration among the offices themselves and with the Governor's Office, just a few miles down the road in Annapolis.

I especially want to thank our state and community partners for their support during this transitional time – we could have not done it without you. I am also thankful for Governor Hogan and his continued support for our office and all Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders.

As we enter the next year, the office now has a strong foundation fully equipped to serve the Governor and Maryland constituents for years to come. With a foundation in place, we move forward confidently toward a bright future for Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelby N. Brick". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Kelby Brick, Esq., CDI
Director



Responsibilities of the Office

The office was established in October 2001 through legislation (Chapter 537 of the Acts of the 2001 General Assembly). In accordance with the State Government Article, section 9-2407 of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the office promotes the general welfare of Deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Maryland by addressing policy gaps, providing expertise related to Deaf and hard of hearing issues, and facilitating the ability to access resources and services in the state of Maryland.

The office believes that all Maryland citizens who are Deaf or hard of hearing should have equal and full access to resources, services, and opportunities for participation in all aspects of community life through the provision of appropriate accommodations.

Priorities of the Office

The office is a policy coordination office of the Governor that is focused on advocating and coordinating the adoption of public policies, regulations, and programs.

The current policy priorities of the Office include the following:

- 1. Deaf Ecosystem** – Expanding the Deaf Ecosystem to support current and aspiring Deaf and hard of hearing business owners in Maryland to reduce underemployment and unemployment.
- 2. Interpreting Quality** – Developing a policy framework to address fraudulent and unqualified interpreters in the state of Maryland.
- 3. Improvement of State Services** – Collaborating with state services, agencies, and programs to improve efficiency and quality of services delivered to Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders.

Staff

Kelby Brick *Director*

Deborah Nathanson *Policy Manager*

Amy Speer *Program Manager*

Allysa Dittmar *Policy Analyst & Executive Assistant to the Director*

Governor's Coordinating Offices

In Maryland, the eight Governor's Coordinating Offices directly serve the Governor. Each office holds specific knowledge and expertise in different fields, allowing for close collaboration and direct information sharing between both parties. In turn, the Governor is more knowledgeable and aware of Marylanders' needs.

Staffed by politically appointed individuals, all eight offices' tasks and priorities are aligned with the Governor's agenda. Along with the Governor's Cabinet, the Coordinating Offices also have a strong influence with numerous state entities, departments, and agencies, allowing for extensive collaboration and consulting.

Governor's Office for Children

Governor's Office of Community Initiatives

Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention

Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Governor's Grants Office

Governor's Office of Minority Affairs

Governor's Office of Performance Improvement

Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism

All eight of the Governor's Coordinating Offices are located at 100 Community Place in Crownsville, Maryland.



L to R: Program Manager Amy Speer, Governor Larry Hogan, Policy Manager Deborah Nathanson, First Lady Yumi Hogan, and Director Kelby Brick at the Governor's annual Holiday Open House in December 2015.

1. Deaf Ecosystem

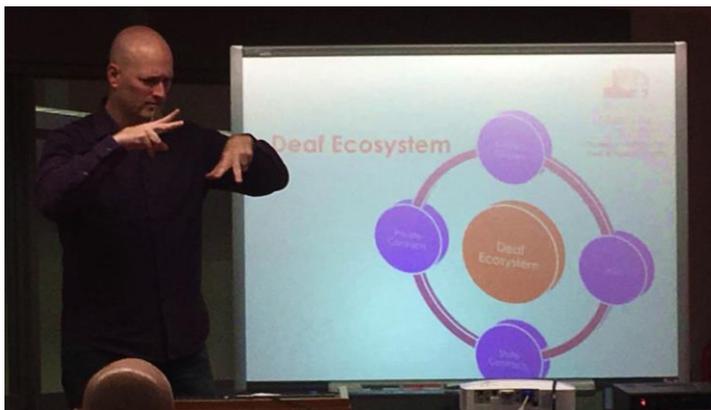
Expanding the Deaf Ecosystem to support current and aspiring Deaf and hard of hearing business owners in Maryland to reduce underemployment and unemployment.

Due to systematic barriers in society ranging from inaccessibility to limited educational training opportunities, the ability to secure long-term, well-paying employment has been difficult for Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders. More than 80 percent of the Deaf and hard of hearing population are either underemployed or unemployed. Deaf and hard of hearing business owners have also faced societal barriers, hindering their ability to maintain and expand businesses.

The Deaf Ecosystem, a term coined by Director Kelby Brick, is a critical tool in combating the pervasive underemployment and unemployment that many Deaf and hard of hearing individuals experience. As commonly witnessed with many other minority groups, the Deaf and hard of hearing community's collective wealth and opportunities are often exploited and dispersed into the larger society. Because resources tend to leave the community, Deaf and hard of hearing individuals are disempowered with severe negative impacts on their socio-economic status.

To enable empowerment, purchasing power, and economic mobility of Deaf and hard of hearing individuals, the Deaf Ecosystem's fundamental approach is to retain and harness the collective socio-economic power within the community's individuals, organizations, and businesses through community collaboration and support. Examples include fostering an inclusive entrepreneurial environment where Deaf and hard of hearing individuals can realize their potential without any barriers, supporting and patronizing local Deaf and hard of hearing businesses, and hiring Deaf and hard of hearing professionals and employees. By working together and supporting one another, the Deaf and hard of hearing community is able to accomplish more than they can alone.

Ultimately, a strong Deaf Ecosystem will lead to increased social and economic clout from the retention and expansion of jobs, resources, and wealth within the Deaf and hard of hearing community. The community's increased influence is leveraged to support the community in turn, creating a synergistic effect. The synergy leads to more healthy, productive, and empowered Deaf and hard of hearing citizens. Social, political, and economic barriers no longer stand in the way and discrimination is eradicated.



Director Kelby Brick discussing the concept and approach of the Deaf Ecosystem during a keynote presentation.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Business Owners

Following Governor's Hogan's declaration that Maryland is open for business, the office has been working on developing a robust Deaf Ecosystem in Maryland. During the past year, the office met with key state entities such as the Governor's Office of Minority Affairs to address the needs and concerns of Deaf and hard of hearing business owners and to create connections and opportunities for business start-up or expansion.

The office conducted a needs assessment to determine Deaf and hard of hearing business owners' current needs and experiences in accessing state resources in Maryland. The office also met with numerous Deaf and hard of hearing business owners throughout the year to gather feedback.

Based on the needs assessment, the office determined several demographic characteristics of the businesses, which can be viewed on the following page (page 9). The office also identified common challenges and concerns among surveyed Deaf and hard of hearing business owners, including unavailability of financial resources, limited networking opportunities, inaccessible resources, inaccessible capital and contracts, and high taxes. A large proportion also reported challenges in accessing local, regional, and state government officials and conferences related to business in Maryland.

To help connect business owners with the Deaf and hard of hearing community and Maryland at large, the office updated a directory composed of Deaf and hard of hearing business owners in Maryland. To view the updated directory, please see: <http://odhh.maryland.gov/directory/#deaf-hard-of-hearing-business-owners>.

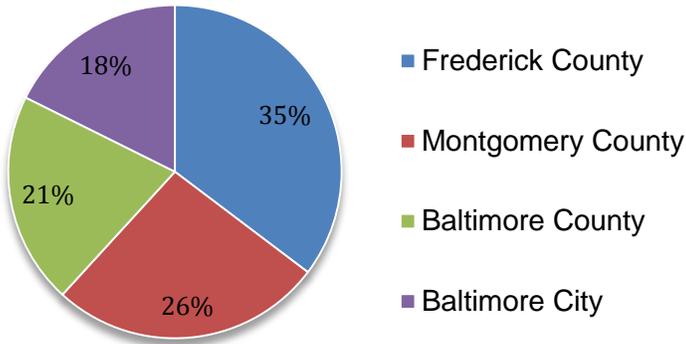
Business Summit and Incubator

In addition to the office connecting state resources with Deaf and hard of hearing business owners on a daily basis, the office plans to host a business summit targeting Deaf and hard of hearing business owners in Maryland. The summit will help address the gaps and challenges in the system reported in the needs assessment by Deaf and hard of hearing business owners. The event will bring together state agencies, programs, and resources, and provide educational and networking opportunities for attendees. The Small Business Administration will be working collaboratively with the office to support the summit, training efforts, and outreach for Deaf and hard of hearing business owners.

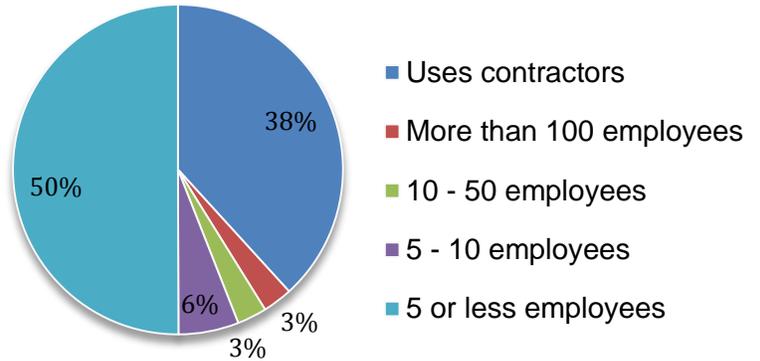
The office has also researched avenues and sources of funding and facilities to potentially establish an incubator to promote the growth of Deaf and hard of hearing businesses in Maryland. Currently, the office provides information and support for those who are interested in starting a business in Maryland. However, a specialized business incubator would enable new Deaf and hard of hearing entrepreneurs to start up their businesses by providing mentorship, expertise, networking, and facility space. An additional benefit to having a specialized business incubator is ensuring sustainability of the Deaf Ecosystem. A white paper addressing the need for the incubator is currently under development.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Business Owners in Maryland: Demographics*

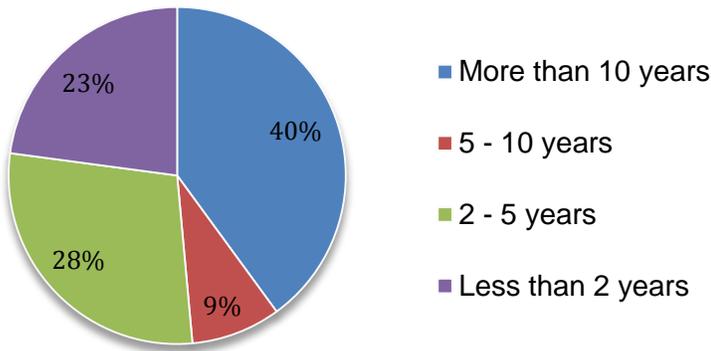
County



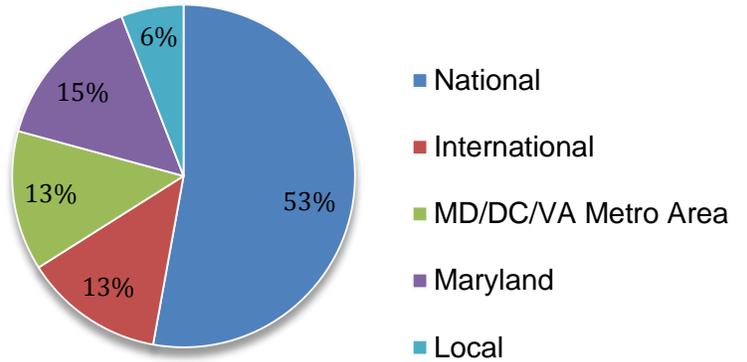
Number of Employees



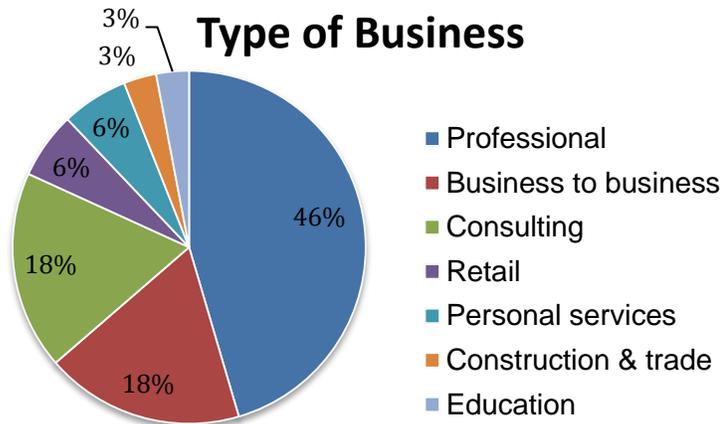
Years of Operation



Customer Base



Type of Business



*The number of Deaf and hard of hearing businesses have expanded since the survey and estimates do not fully represent all Deaf and hard of hearing businesses in Maryland.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Employees and Job-Seekers

To ensure that all Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders have an equal footing in employment, the office has worked diligently to address accessibility issues with state entities and programs involved with employment initiatives.

The office also connects Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders with key state employment programs and resources such as the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR), and Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD).

The office is currently working on developing a comprehensive web page focused on supporting and connecting Deaf and hard of hearing employees, job seekers, and business owners to existing employment initiatives, programs, and resources.

Over 1.2 Million Deaf and Hard of Hearing Marylanders

In 2011, Johns Hopkins researchers published a study that estimates the total number of people who are Deaf or hard of hearing in the United States.

The study's findings suggested that 48.1 million Americans (20.3%) of all Americans aged 12 years or older are deaf or hard of hearing in at least one ear and 30 million Americans (12.7%) of all Americans aged 12 years or older are deaf or hard of hearing in both ears.

Extrapolating from the Johns Hopkins study's finding and the U.S. Census Bureau's data for Maryland, it is estimated that there are approximately 1.2 million Marylanders aged 12 years or older who are deaf or hard of hearing in at least one ear.

Due to the local presence of the federal government, the Maryland School for the Deaf, and Gallaudet University, it is commonly accepted that the prestige, access and availability of employment and educational opportunities in the area attract more residents to Maryland. By working towards a thriving Deaf Ecosystem, Maryland will become an attractive place to live in, work, and retire.

To read more about the findings, please see: <https://odhh.maryland.gov/featured-story/over-1-2-million-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing-marylanders/>.



2. Interpreting Quality

Developing a policy framework to address fraudulent and unqualified interpreters.

In the past year, the office has received numerous complaints about unqualified and fraudulent sign language interpreters from constituents and businesses across the state. Unqualified and fraudulent interpreters in courts, government, schools, hospitals, and many other settings can cause significant harm to Deaf and hard of hearing constituents by failing to convey information and effectively isolating Deaf and hard of hearing constituents from their community at large. To ensure equitable communication and language accessibility for all Deaf and hard of hearing constituents in Maryland, the office monitors information on fraudulent practices involving unqualified sign language interpreters and refers constituents to the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights for follow-up when such situations arise.

The office also supported the concept of potential interpreter licensure legislation for the state of Maryland to prevent fraudulent and unqualified sign language interpreters. However, since the process was based on the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID)'s certification process, the project was put on hold when RID put a moratorium on the certification process (<http://bit.ly/2faseEi>).

Consequently, the office shifted gears and has been gathering information on alternatives for assessing and ensuring interpreting quality in Maryland that is not contingent on RID. In accordance with Governor Hogan's agenda to improve state efficiency, the office has been conducting research on ways to improve the efficiency and quality of interpreting services within state departments and agencies in Maryland, such as the possibility of centralizing interpreting services within the state. At the beginning of FY16, the office increased quality control and efficiency by streamlining its interpreting processes into one primary interpreting agency and exclusively contracting with only qualified and certified interpreters.

The Need for Certified Interpreters

As required by state and federal law, private and public entities must provide qualified interpreters and other accommodations (such as real-time captioning) for Deaf and hard of hearing constituents. The office always advises entities to use interpreters who are certified from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). RID sets the minimum standards for interpreting since certification is not required in the state of Maryland. Whenever using an interpreter from an interpreting agency (who may hire both uncertified and certified interpreters) or a freelance interpreter, always ask if interpreters are certified from RID. 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/#interpreting-communication-access>.

The office continues to provide assistance with RID regarding the certification process, especially with the certification process for Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs), in an attempt to improve the process for interpreters in Maryland and across the country.

The office has especially promoted the growth and use of the Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) profession, ensuring that CDIs are used in state emergency broadcasts, public official meetings, and meetings that involve DeafBlind constituents. Having fluency in various American Sign Language (ASL) dialects is critical and necessary for different interpreting situations and CDIs are the most able to provide high-quality services because ASL is their primary and native language.

State Emergency Broadcasts

In the past, Deaf and hard of hearing constituents raised concerns about the absence of sign language interpreters during state emergency broadcasts, and if provided, the interpreters would often be cut off screen. To address the framing issue, the office developed and distributed a memorandum to media outlets in Maryland regarding the on-screen framing of the speaker and interpreter. Several recommendations were made, such as ensuring that the interpreter is fully on-screen rather than being cropped off-screen.

Since the memorandum, broadcasts have been top-notch with effective and clear communication. Local counties have also emulated the office's model and other states have contacted the office to learn more about the criteria. To see the memorandum on state emergency broadcasts, please see: https://odhh.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2016/01/Broadcasting_Memo_ODHH.pdf.



L to R: Lieutenant Governor Boyd K. Rutherford, Governor Larry Hogan, Adjutant General Linda Singh, Director Brick (as a CDI), and Secretary Van T. Mitchell during a state emergency broadcast in January 2016 in response to Winter Storm Jonas.



3. Improvement of State Services

Collaborating with state services, agencies, and programs to improve efficiency and quality of services delivered to Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders.

To improve the efficiency and quality of services provided to Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders, the office collaborates with state programs and agencies on a daily basis. The office actively serves on and provides expertise to numerous advisory groups, boards, focus groups, and policy meetings.

Early Language Acquisition and Bilingualism

Across the country, many Deaf and hard of hearing children show up to school either without language or delayed in language, impacting them for the rest of their lives. This is because those children have not had access to language—American Sign Language—as a visual language, and English.

This issue of not providing these children early access to language has been an ongoing and recognized issue at the national level, the local level, and in Maryland's own Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Advisory Council, which comprises parents, professionals and Deaf individuals.

Given that 90 - 95 percent of Deaf and hard of hearing infants are born to hearing parents who often have very little to no knowledge or command of American Sign Language (ASL), it is critical that we develop better support systems for these families.

A part of that process is ensuring that parents be given accurate and critical information. A common misconception that often occurs is that ASL is a communication option rather than a bona fide language. Another misconception is that parents need to choose between ASL and English even though data repeatedly shows that these options are not mutually exclusive and that the best way to prevent language deprivation for most Deaf and hard of hearing children is to provide them with access to both languages within months of birth. There is no scientific basis for limiting Deaf and hard of hearing children's access to multiple languages.

The office worked with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention program to modify the letter sent to parents of infants identified as Deaf or hard of hearing. The updated letter explains that delays in exposure to language acquisition can lead to language deprivation and that, while there are many communication options for families to consider later in life, it is critical to receive exposure to language immediately.

The office also conducted a comprehensive review on the dissemination of information provided by the Maryland Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program, under the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. To help explain the EHDI process to the general public, the office released a resource guide, which can be viewed here: <http://odhh.maryland.gov/resource-guide-early-hearing-detection-and-intervention/>.

Governor Larry Hogan Honors Maryland Native and Deaf Advocate Nyle DiMarco

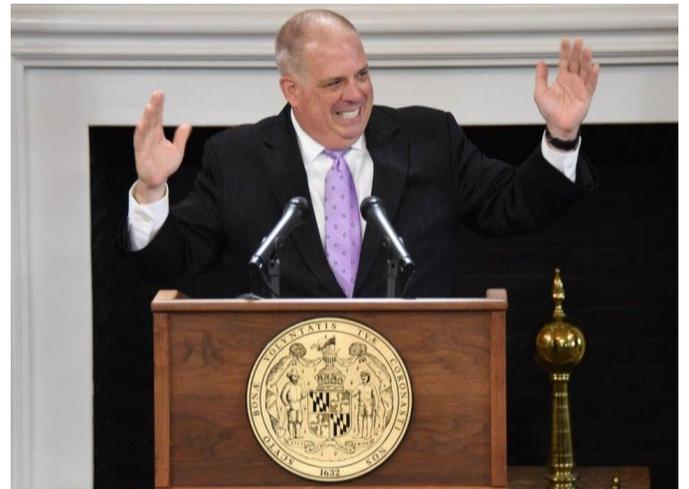
*Event Highlights State's Commitment to Early
Language Acquisition Among Deaf and Hard of
Hearing Children*

At the end of FY16 on behalf of the Governor, the office started working towards recognizing and honoring Maryland native Nyle DiMarco for his advocacy efforts on behalf of Deaf and hard of hearing children. A graduate of the Maryland School for the Deaf and Gallaudet University, DiMarco is the most recent winner of ABC's *Dancing with the Stars* and the CW's *America's Next Top Model*. He recently founded the Nyle DiMarco Foundation, which advocates for full and early access to both American Sign Language and English for Deaf and hard of hearing children in the United States.

On September 7, 2016, Governor Hogan honored Nyle DiMarco with a Governor's citation commending his outstanding accomplishments, efforts, leadership and advocacy in the Deaf and hard of hearing community. To watch Governor Hogan and Nyle DiMarco's speeches, please see: <http://bit.ly/2eVluKW>. To view the Governor's formal press release and photos, please see: <http://bit.ly/2e6J85U>.

“ Nyle has made it his mission to help Deaf children become confident and independent in a hearing world because, as Nyle puts it, every child deserves love and language. ”

- Governor Larry Hogan



From top to bottom: (L to R) Director Kelby Brick, Nyle DiMarco, and Governor Larry Hogan; Governor Hogan giving a round of applause; and Nyle DiMarco giving his acceptance speech upon receiving the Governor's Citation.

In addition to working with state and private entities to ensure access to language, the office also worked closely with members of the Maryland General Assembly and the Deaf and hard of hearing community during the 2016 Maryland Legislative Session by providing technical assistance and advocating for Senate Bill 781 and House Bill 596, which were later signed into law by Governor Hogan.

SB 781 officially recognizes American Sign Language as a language by granting bilingual students graduating from Maryland public high schools the opportunity to receive a seal on their high school diploma. For more information about SB 781, please refer to page 23.

HB 596 expands the Hearing Aid Loan Bank Program, which is operated by the Maryland State Department of Education. Previously, the age of eligibility was 3 years old and under. Now, children under the age of 18 are eligible to participate in the program, enabling more children to receive access to language. For more information about HB 596, please refer to page 23.

Because the office consistently receives many calls about how to acquire and finance hearing aids for children, the office released a resource guide on insurance and financial assistance related to hearing aids and other audiology services for children and adults. To view the resource guide, please see: http://odhh.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2015/10/financial_assistance_guide_audiology.pdf.

Senior Citizens

In the past year, the office met with different stakeholders and state agencies to identify how the system provides access to older citizens in regard to three areas: housing, community centers, and nursing homes. The office especially worked closely with Maryland Deaf Senior Citizens, Inc. and local representatives from the Hearing Loss Association of America to identify how accessibility to state services can be improved for older Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders.

After gathering extensive feedback from constituents, the office has been exploring different avenues in both the private and public sectors to increase accessible housing, nursing homes, and community centers for Deaf and hard of hearing senior citizens.

Since a large proportion of senior citizens experience declining hearing, the office helps connect older individuals on a daily basis with resources related to assistive technology, hearing aids, and telecommunications. To help individuals navigate through different types of assistive technology, the office updated a resource guide on assistive technology and refers constituents to the Department of Information Technology's Maryland Relay service. To view the resource guide on assistive technology, please see: <http://odhh.maryland.gov/resource-guide-assistive-technology/>.

In addition to the assistive technology resource guide, the office often refers older individuals to the office's resource guide on insurance and financial assistance related to hearing aids and other audiology services. To view the resource guide, please see: http://odhh.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2015/10/financial_assistance_guide_audiology.pdf.



Clockwise from top right: (L to R) Director Kelby Brick, Nancy Jenkins, and Lance Fischer – Jenkins and Fischer serve on the Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Director Brick with local representatives from Baltimore Senior Age; Director Brick with local representatives from the Hearing Loss Association of America's Greater Baltimore chapter.

Mental Health Services

Throughout the year, the office gathered feedback from community mental health organizations and providers who serve Deaf and hard of hearing individuals, including the Family Services Foundation and local Deaf and hard of hearing psychologists and professionals. Several common challenges and concerns were noted, including the lack of local, culturally competent mental health providers who are fluent in American Sign Language (ASL).

To close the gap and increase direct mental health services, the office has worked closely with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene since September 2015 to increase the availability of mental health providers who are fluent in ASL to Deaf and hard of hearing individuals through telehealth. Previously, Deaf and hard of hearing Medicaid participants often had to travel long distances to originating sites (such as doctor's offices) to use telehealth services with a culturally competent provider fluent in ASL. Medicaid also only reimbursed psychiatrists despite the fact that there are no psychiatrists in the state of Maryland who know ASL.

Together, the office and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene drafted changes to regulations in the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR 10.09.49 Telehealth Services) and in FY17, the changes were proposed and adopted. Maryland is now the first state where Medicaid specifically permits and reimburses qualified providers such as psychologists and social workers who are fluent in ASL for clinically appropriate telehealth services with Deaf and hard of hearing Medicaid participants. The changes also permit Deaf and hard of hearing participants to use videophones in an effort to prevent traveling to a specific originating site location. The proposed

regulations can be found in the Maryland Register's August 19th publication (Volume 43, Issue 17).

The office also developed a resource guide on the importance of direct and culturally competent mental health services with an updated listing of available mental health providers in Maryland who have specific experience in working with the Deaf and hard of hearing population. To view the resource guide, please see: <http://odhh.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2015/11/Mental-Health.pdf> and <http://odhh.maryland.gov/directory/#mental-health> for the updated listing.

Additionally, the office serves on the statewide Behavioral Health Advisory Council, which focuses on promoting and advocating for a culturally competent and comprehensive approach to publicly funded prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery services that support and offer wellness, recovery, resiliency, and health for individuals. Director Brick co-chairs the Cultural and Linguistic Competence Committee.

Health Insurance and Health Services

To increase accessibility to health insurance and information, the office worked with Maryland Health Connection (MHC), Maryland's official health insurance marketplace, to improve its Deaf and hard of hearing services and to ensure that the enrollment process is accessible to all Deaf and hard of hearing constituents. With the office's assistance, MHC ensured that all instructional videos on MHC's website were closed-captioned properly and developed a video in American Sign Language, which was recently released: <http://bit.ly/2geqYlt>. American Sign Language will soon be included as one of the languages that applicants can choose as their preferred language during the online enrollment process.

The office also connected MHC with Maryland Relay to ensure that MHC's Consumer Service Center is equipped to manage third-party relay calls efficiently. With the office's assistance, MHC reached out to Deaf and hard of hearing organizations and entities with information on how to participate and receive training in the Application Counselor Sponsored Entity program so that Deaf and hard of hearing consumer assistance workers can directly work with other Deaf and hard of hearing consumers.

In accordance with increasing accessibility to health-related information, the office works with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene on a consistent basis to ensure that any new, emerging health information is accessible to Deaf and hard of hearing constituents by ensuring that health information-related videos are closed-captioned and also available in American Sign Language. Examples of closed-captioned content available in ASL include the Zika (<http://bit.ly/1PFgiJp>) and Ebola viruses (<http://bit.ly/2eVucZW>).

Lastly, the office provides information and resources on an ongoing basis to constituents who have difficulty accessing the healthcare system. The office receives numerous calls related to interpreting and accessibility issues at doctor's offices and hospitals, oftentimes because interpreters were not provided or unqualified interpreters were provided instead. The office guides constituents in finding appropriate support services and works with healthcare entities to ensure accessibility of their services by providing technical assistance.

Civil Rights

In May 2016, the office collaborated with the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) to address concerns regarding civil rights challenges and issues that Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders face. The office provided guidance on how to enhance MCCR's services to Deaf and hard of hearing constituents, such as providing outreach and training in conjunction with the Maryland Association of the Deaf. Through the trainings, constituents learn how to navigate through the MCCR process and file civil rights complaints. A video in American Sign Language made by the office have been linked to MCCR's website to ensure accessibility in filing complaints through MCCR. The video can be viewed on MCCR's website: <http://bit.ly/2f6SCjp>.

Captioning and Visual Access

The office made great strides this fiscal year in providing increased captioning and visual access. In the fall of 2015, when Governor Hogan announced Baltimore's new transit system, BaltimoreLink, the office was proud to work with the Maryland Department of Transportation to ensure access to visual alerts for Deaf and hard of hearing riders. BaltimoreLink is a \$135 million investment to transform and improve transit throughout the Baltimore metropolitan area by redesigning the entire local and express bus systems throughout the city: <http://bit.ly/2f6nzGQ>.

In addition, during the 2016 legislative session, Governor Hogan signed HB 413 into law. HB 413 established a pilot program on closed captioning for live and archived video streaming on the Maryland General Assembly website.

To continue the expansion of accessible venues in Maryland, the office recently collaborated with the Baltimore Ravens Stadium's media team to improve on-screen captioning at public events. In the past, on-screen captioning at the stadium was very small and nearly unreadable for Deaf and hard of hearing attendees. Since captionists were contracted out of state, the captioning also suffered from delays and typographical errors. To remedy this issue and carry out Governor Hogan's agenda of expanding Maryland's economy, the office connected the media team with local, experienced captionists and vendors who now provide services for the stadium. Captioning accessibility at the stadium has significantly increased and the stadium now boasts one of the best captioning in the country.

The office also worked with Baltimore Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI) authority to ensure that the facility is accessible to Deaf and hard of hearing travelers. Due to complaints and safety concerns from Deaf and hard of hearing travelers about the lack of visual announcements for changes in baggage claims, the office encouraged BWI to develop automatic visual text announcements in the baggage claim area, which has been implemented. In January 2016, BWI also set up a public videophone kiosk and depending on its success and demand, BWI will consider implementing more kiosks throughout the airport.

To learn more about the law that dictates use of closed captioning in public places, please see: <http://odhh.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2015/10/SB68FactSheet1.pdf>.

Deaf Culture Digital Library

In 2014, the Maryland Legislature passed House Bill 653, which established the Deaf Culture Digital Library (DCDL). The DCDL is a “first stop” information center that provides Maryland residents, local public library staff, college and university librarians, and other libraries in Maryland with access to online resources on Deaf culture, a comprehensive electronic collection of Deaf resources, Deaf cultural programs, and training programs for library staff.

Montgomery County Public Libraries was selected by the Maryland State Division of Library Development and Services as the site for the DCDL. Susan Cohen, a Deaf librarian, was designated as the DCDL project coordinator. The office worked closely with the DCDL project coordinator in making the digital library a reality, providing consultation on the creation of the Advisory Board and Friends of DCDL, the bylaws, the position descriptions, and website design. Policy Manager Deborah Nathanson represents the office on the DCDL Advisory Board.

Teacher Certification Process

The office has been working with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and other stakeholders in updating and strengthening the regulatory requirements for certifying teachers of Deaf and hard of hearing children.

During the next fiscal year, the office expects the finalized recommended language to be presented to the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board (PSTEB) and then to the State Board of Education for review. If the regulatory changes are approved, the proposed language will be published in the Maryland Register. At that time, anyone from the public can offer comment on the proposed change to MSDE before final approval.

Governor’s Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Honors Rockville High School

On June 2, 2016, the office honored Rockville High School for winning the National Deaf and Hard of Hearing Academic Bowl Championship in April 2016. The event was held at the Governor’s Reception Room at the State House in Annapolis.

At the event, each student received an individual citation from the Governor. Delegate Eric Luedtke from Montgomery County also joined the event and honored the students with a legislative citation as well. To read more about the event and view photos, please see: <http://bit.ly/2f6NLil>.



L to R: Coach Chester Kuschmider, Coach Jenna Hubble, Ruthie Ferster, Jaclyn Gleicher, Director Kelby Brick, Jonathan Summers, Bryan Yun, and Delegate Eric Luedtke.

2016 Legislative Awareness Day

The 7th annual Legislative Awareness Day was held on March 7, 2016. The event took place at the Joint Hearing Room in the Department of Legislative Services building in Annapolis. Director Brick provided training on the legislative process. Lieutenant Governor Boyd K. Rutherford presented the annual Governor's Kelby Brick Community Leadership Award to Ethelette Ennis. The office recognized the following honorees for their important work that they do on behalf of the Deaf and hard of hearing community in Maryland:

Ethelette Ennis *Kelby Brick Community Leadership Award*

Dr. Heather Hunt *Spirit of the Office Award*

Nancy Jenkins *Civic Engagement Award*

Brenda Kelly-Frey *Outstanding Ally Award*

Howard County Executive Alan H. Kittleman *Outstanding Public Official Award*



Clockwise from top right: Lieutenant Governor Boyd Rutherford presenting the annual Governor's Kelby Brick Community Leadership Award to Ethelette Ennis; Lt. Governor Rutherford signing "thank you" to Director Brick; (L to R) Howard County Executive Alan Kittleman, Brenda Kelly-Frey, Nancy Jenkins, and Ethelette Ennis, 2016 award recipients.

Collaborating with State Agencies

To improve the efficiency and quality of services provided to Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders, a critical aspect in achieving such services is providing technical assistance and collaborating with state agencies. Here are a few more highlights from this past year:

Maryland Department of Disabilities The office provided feedback and analysis on the Maryland State Disabilities Plan and the Ethan Saylor Act.

Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services The office provided recommendations on how the state can ensure compliance with the Jarboe et al. settlement (<http://bit.ly/2eeuo4P>).

Maryland State Department of Education The office is actively involved in the Deaf/Hard of Hearing Workgroup and provides consultation on issues involving educational interpreters and teacher qualifications for Deaf and hard of hearing programs across the state. The office worked with the Howard County Department of Education and the Howard County Association of the Deaf to develop a process to recruit ASL teachers.

Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services With the goal to expand the Deaf Ecosystem, the office provided feedback on ways to expand training and educational avenues for gainful employment and creation of businesses for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals, including creating business enterprise opportunities.



Top: Staff from the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing staff with staff from the Division of Rehabilitation Services staff.

Left: (L to R) Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) Director of Communication and Outreach Carrie McGraw, MDOD Secretary Carol Beatty, Director Kelby Brick, MDOD Director of Employment Policy Jade Gingerich, Policy Analyst Allysa Dittmar, Policy Manager Deborah Nathanson, and Program Manager Amy Speer.

Director Keynotes & Appearances

- Baltimore Senior Age
- Maryland Department of Disabilities' 25th ADA Anniversary
- Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TDI) conference
- Gallaudet University vs. Towson University basketball game
- National Association of Law Students with Disabilities annual conference
- Maryland Association of the Deaf conference
- Metro Washington Association of the DeafBlind meeting
- Hearing Loss of America, Greater Baltimore chapter meeting
- Deaf Grassroots Movement rally
- Maryland Early Hearing Detection and Intervention conference



Director Brick at the Maryland Association of the Deaf conference.

Towson Tigers v. Gallaudet Bison Basketball Game

The office released a Public Service Announcement video along with factoids about the Deaf and hard of hearing community on November 24, 2015 at the Towson University v. Gallaudet University basketball game in Towson, MD.

Former Miss Deaf America and Miss Maryland Chanel Gleicher signed the national anthem.

To view the PSA, please see: <http://bit.ly/2eBmQu3>.



Release of the PSA at Towson University's basketball arena.



Key Legislation Signed by Governor Hogan

Each year during the Legislative Session, the office monitors and provides testimonies, as appropriate, on bills relevant to Deaf and hard of hearing constituents.

During the 2016 Maryland Legislative Session, Governor Hogan signed into law four bills that support Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders. The office provided technical assistance and support on these four bills:

House Bill 596 – The bill alters the age of eligibility from 3 years old to 17 and under to participate in the Hearing Aid Loan Bank Program, which is operated by the Maryland State Department of Education. The program was initially created to provide infants and toddlers up to the age of 3 immediate access to hearing aids following confirmation of hearing loss by an audiologist. The passage of the bill now gives additional families the same access. To view the press release, please see: <http://odhh.maryland.gov/press-releases/press-release-governor-larry-hogan-signs-house-bill-596/>.

Senate Bill 272 – The bill authorizes Deaf and hard of hearing recipients of the Delegate Howard P. Rawlings Educational Excellence Award to utilize the award's funds to attend any out of state school, including schools in Washington D.C. The bill exempts Gallaudet University from the in-state requirements of the award, enabling more Deaf and hard of hearing students from Maryland to attend Gallaudet, the world's premier university for Deaf and hard of hearing students. To view the press release, please see: <http://odhh.maryland.gov/featured-story/announcement-governor-larry-hogan-signs-senate-bill-272/>.

Senate Bill 413 – The bill establishes a pilot program on closed captioning for live and archived video streaming on the Maryland General Assembly website. In addition to Deaf and hard of hearing constituents, the pilot program also helps those who are learning English as a second language and those who are unable to understand on-screen dialogue. To view the press release, please see: <http://odhh.maryland.gov/featured-story/announcement-governor-larry-hogan-signs-house-bill-413/>.

Senate Bill 781 – The bill grants bilingual students graduating from Maryland public high schools the opportunity to receive a seal on their high school diploma signifying their biliteracy skills. American Sign Language (ASL) was specifically recognized in this bill as one of the eligible languages. Members of the Class of 2017 will be the first graduates eligible to receive the seal. To view the press release, please see: <http://odhh.maryland.gov/press-releases/press-release-governor-larry-hogan-signs-senate-bill-781/>.



Internal Reorganization

When the new staff first joined the office in the beginning of FY16, there was a significant need for a robust and sustainable internal process that would last beyond each administration while systematically solving problems that manifest in Maryland. There was no internal office manual and standardized procedures, which posed several challenges for the new staff. Additionally, Deaf and hard of hearing constituents would often experience the same recurrent issues throughout Maryland. Instead of addressing the same issues repeatedly, the office shifted its focus from outreach, training, and direct services into a policy coordination office so that the office can take a systematic approach to permanently solve such issues in the state. The change in focus is consistent with the duties and responsibilities of a Governor's Coordinating Office. To ensure consistent quality control and to maximize the office's impact on the state, the staff took several measures, including developing a comprehensive internal manual and standardized procedures.

Constituent Services

When the office receives calls related to direct services, the office provides and coordinates referrals to the appropriate entity. In particular, requests for training and consulting services related to the Deaf and hard of hearing community have been referred to Deaf and hard of hearing consultants, professionals, and business owners as part of the Deaf Ecosystem's initiative to economically empower the community.

Directory

The office is also in the process of updating all information from outdated directories on the office's website into one virtual directory, so that visitors can easily find contact information and resources pertaining to a specific field or area. Previously, many directories were created in PDF format and posted in different places on the office's website, which posed the inability for constituents to easily find information and for office staff to update the directories on a consistent basis.

Since the virtual directory is now in a webpage format, staff can update the directory any time without causing changes in the directory's hyperlink. Before, every time a directory needed to be updated, the changes would cause the hyperlink to also change due to the PDF format, which caused constituents to lose the old hyperlinks. Now, with the virtual directory, constituents are able to access the directory with the same hyperlink any time.

To view the virtual directory, please see: <http://odhh.maryland.gov/directory/>. Several areas are currently being updated and if constituents wish to add updated or new information to a specific area or field in the directory, constituents can contact the office at gov.odhh@maryland.gov.

Website

The office's website has undergone significant re-organization and archiving to make it more accessible and organized. The website is updated on a daily basis to update broken hyperlinks and outdated information. The website re-organization is an ongoing process and has not yet been complete.

Weekly Newsletters

Because the office recently transitioned from outreach to policy coordination, the office suspended the weekly newsletters as part of its strategy to maximize policy coordination and implementation. The weekly newsletters decreased the efficiency of the office and the newsletters' open rates were consistently low, ranging from 25% to 30%.

Instead of sending weekly e-mails, the office focused on distributing specific e-mail announcements on important events and reminders related to the office and the state. The office increased the e-mail open rate, ranging consistently from 35% to 45%, while increasing the e-mail subscription base.

Manual

The lack of an internal manual significantly impeded efficiency for the new staff when addressing state and constituent issues on a daily basis. Throughout the year, the office developed a manual to ensure consistency and to improve efficiency within the office. As part of Governor Hogan's recent Customer Service Promise initiative, standard responses regarding constituent information, state policies, and procedures have been developed.



The State of Maryland pledges to provide constituents, businesses, customers, and stakeholders with services in the following manner:

- **Friendly and Courteous:** We will be helpful and supportive and have a positive attitude and passion for what we do.
- **Timely and Responsive:** We will be proactive, take initiative, and anticipate your needs.
- **Accurate and Consistent:** We will always aim for 100% accuracy, and be consistent in how we interpret and implement state policies and procedures.
- **Accessible and Convenient:** We will continue to simplify and improve access to information and resources.
- **Truthful and Transparent:** We will advance a culture of honesty, clarity and trust.



Communications

The office decided to shift its focus from email communications to social media since constituents are increasingly using social media as the primary way to receive news and updates. Whenever the office posts a message on Facebook, the post is re-shared through the office's Twitter account. If constituents do not have a Facebook or Twitter account, the office's website, www.odhh.maryland.gov, has a live newsfeed featuring the office's social media posts.

With the office maximizing the use of Facebook and Twitter in the past year, the office received stellar results. The number of individuals who follow the office's Facebook page more than doubled (118% growth). In FY15, the average Facebook post from the office reached 7 people. In FY16, the average Facebook post from the office reached 769 people, with many posts reaching thousands.

Top Five Facebook Posts of FY16

- **Improving Closed Captioning at the Baltimore Ravens Stadium** (<http://bit.ly/2gMESuX>) – Reached **179,937** people. To read more about the project, please see page 18.
- **Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Motion to Prevent Language Deprivation** (<http://bit.ly/2g4UhrZ>) – Reached **51,700** people. To read more about the motion, please see page 13.
- **Public Service Announcement Video Highlighting Maryland's 1.2 Million Deaf and Hard of Hearing Citizens** (<http://bit.ly/2eBmQu3>) – Reached **38,002** people. To read more about the statistics behind the PSA, please see page 10.
- **Bilingual Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students Will Receive Seal on their High School Diplomas in Maryland** (<http://bit.ly/2gzt9ly>) – Reached **23,901** people. To read more about the bill, please see page 23.
- **Announcement of the Office's Legislative Awareness Day Award Recipients** (<http://bit.ly/2gMHfhe>) – Reached **22,227** people. To read more about the event, please see page 20.

Social Media Channels



www.facebook.com/MDGODHH



<https://twitter.com/mdodhh>

To join the office's e-mail distribution list: <http://bit.ly/2fD2mpu>.



Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing was established in October 2001 to advise and give support to the Maryland Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The Council, which is appointed by the Governor, is headed by a Chair and Vice Chair and consists of 18 members – nine members representing State agencies and nine members representing the Deaf and hard of hearing community.

In FY16, Jason Corning was the Chair of the advisory council, along with Erin Buck-Skees as the Vice Chair and Charm Smith as Secretary. The first DeafBlind chair of the Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Corning served as an excellent leader and liaison between the advisory council and the office. Always ready to listen and facilitate discussion from advisory council members, the office is tremendously grateful for Corning's leadership and wishes him all the best in his future endeavors. At the last meeting of FY16, Stephanie Summers was elected as the chair.

Jason Corning *Chair*

Erin Buck-Skees *Vice Chair*

Charm Smith *Secretary*

Citizen Representatives

Ann C. Black (DeafBlind)
Jason Corning
Dr. Lisalee Egbert
Lance Fischer (Special Expertise)
Nancy G. Jenkins, Esq.
Charm L. Smith
Stephanie R. Summers (Parent)

Maryland State Department of Education

Marion Marny Helfrich

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Tanya D. Green

Department of Human Resources

Gregory S. James

Maryland Department of Transportation

Janet Moyer Cornick

Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

Stacy Spencer Dove

Department of Licensing, Labor, and Regulation

Ed Schwabeland

Maryland School for the Deaf

Erin Buck-Skees

Maryland Department of Transportation

Dakota Burgess

To view upcoming advisory council meetings and prior meetings' minutes, please see:
<http://odhh.maryland.gov/meetings/>.

To contact the Chair, please e-mail the Chair at: macdhhchair@gmail.com.



Town Hall Meetings

As required by the office's enacting statute, the office must host at least two public town hall meetings each year to gather public feedback on the quality of state services and programs, the needs of Deaf and hard of hearing individuals, and the functions and operations of the office.

Instead of only hosting two town hall meetings annually, the office decided to increase the number of town hall meetings to a minimum of four meetings each year.

After each advisory council meeting, the office hosts the town hall meetings to promote more engagement among council members and constituents. This new model provides an important opportunity for the office and council members to gather feedback and gain a better understanding of the community's needs. In doing so, the constituents' feedback help guide the office and council members through the Governor's priorities and state issues.

In FY16, the town hall meetings were held on:

- **September 28, 2015**
- **December 18, 2015**
- **February 19, 2016**
- **June 8, 2016**

In FY17, the town hall meetings are scheduled for:

- **September 22, 2016**
- **December 15, 2016**
- **March 16, 2017**
- **June 8, 2017**

To view locations of the upcoming meetings, please see: <http://odhh.maryland.gov/meetings/>. The office will also host other town hall meetings to be announced via our social media channels.



Moving Forward

As the office enters the New Year, the office is more equipped than ever in continuing to change the status quo. The office's staff is committed to ensuring accessibility of all state programs and entities, so that Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders have equal and full access to resources, services, and opportunities for participation in all aspects of life.

The office is especially committed to enhancing the quality of life for Deaf and hard of hearing children and adults by advocating for their language rights and the expansion of the Deaf Ecosystem. With greater empowerment in the community, Deaf and hard of hearing individuals can actively participate and contribute to society as equal citizens of Maryland.

“A tremendous challenge lies ahead. When less than half of deaf adults are employed, strong and decisive action is necessary. The status quo is intolerable.”

- Director Kelby
Brick

Gallaudet's New President

Gallaudet appoints Roberta "Bobbi" Cordano as its next president

In response to Gallaudet University's appointment of Bobbi Cordano as its next president, Director Kelby Brick wrote an op-ed in *The Baltimore Sun* emphasizing the importance of breaking the status quo:

"Ms. Cordano is clearly ready to tackle the status quo, however. In accepting her appointment, she acknowledged the challenges ahead and stated that 'there is great promise to develop and graduate future leaders who will make significant contributions to our country and the world.'

Upon my appointment to lead Governor Larry Hogan's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, I was given the mandate to prioritize the economic empowerment of Deaf and hard of hearing individuals, recognizing that a strong deaf community benefits the larger economy. This means addressing the underemployment and unemployment and encouraging more business ownership and entrepreneurship among the deaf and hard of hearing.

A strong education system is key to reaching these goals.

Neither Gallaudet nor any government agency can address the education and employment gap alone, however. All eyes may be on Ms. Cordano during this time of great excitement and change, but we must remember that we too have roles in changing the status quo and transforming the world. Anything less is unacceptable."

To read the op-ed, please see: <http://bsun.md/2fT91vv>.



Staff Biographies

Kelby Brick *Director* – Brick led efforts in 2001 to establish the Maryland Governor’s Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and his appointment represents a “return to home” for him. In 2011, Brick was the first recipient of the Governor’s Kelby Brick Community Leadership Award, which has been given annually ever since. Prior to becoming director of the office, Brick was the director for law and advocacy at the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), where he successfully mobilized NAD to establish precedents and landmark decisions in litigation and legislative and regulatory areas while increasing NAD’s presence. Brick then became vice president of Purple Communications, Inc., where he led the company’s regulatory and strategic policies to break down communication barriers for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals across the country. Brick transformed the telecommunications relay services industry, which provides full telephone accessibility to individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-disabled. Brick led efforts in establishing a system that enables relay equipment to be interoperable and accessible with real local phone numbers and emergency access, which was later adopted by the Federal Communications Commission. In 2013, Brick founded Brick Advantage, a consulting firm that works with and advises corporations and non-profits. Brick is active in numerous advocacy organizations and served as a board member of the American Association of People with Disabilities as well as various federal and local advisory groups. Brick has a Bachelor of Arts in government from Gallaudet University and a law degree from the Temple University Beasley School of Law. He is the first deaf graduate of the law school. He is also a Certified Deaf Interpreter.

Deborah Nathanson *Policy Manager* -- For more than twenty years, Nathanson has been involved in the fields of deafness, sign language interpreting, and disabilities. She co-founded L5, LLC, a firm that offers consultancy, advocacy, and professional development training and education services in the fields of hearing loss, disabilities, and sign language interpreting in the public and private sectors. She was previously the coordinator of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Domestic Violence Program in Minnesota, and a specialist at the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Nathanson has served as adjunct faculty at several universities, most recently at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. She earned a master’s degree from University of Texas-Austin and a bachelor’s degree from Gallaudet University. She has also earned numerous certifications and graduate credits in the fields of Disability Studies, Non-profit/For-profit organizational management, and Museum/Archival Studies.

Amy Speer *Program Manager* – Speer was previously the Program Coordinator at the Community Outreach Program For The Deaf in Tucson, Arizona, working with the Deaf, hard of hearing, Deaf-Blind, focusing on expanding employment opportunities and breaking down communication barriers. She provided direct services to individuals in community settings, job sites, home residences and community education classes. She was previously a paraprofessional at the Rocky Mountain Deaf School, a charter school in Colorado. She earned her bachelor's degree from Gallaudet University and was involved in various programs including the Institution of Political and Leadership Access and the Women Leadership Training Institute.

Allysa Dittmar *Policy Analyst & Executive Assistant to the Director* – Dittmar is currently a second year graduate public health student at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and a clinical research intern at the Kennedy Krieger Institute (Johns Hopkins Medicine). Dittmar co-founded the Deaf Health Initiative, a Maryland non-profit organization dedicated to transforming healthcare for the Deaf and hard of hearing. Dittmar's main research focus is on improving the health and wellbeing of the Deaf and hard of hearing community. Her other research interests include pediatrics, minority health disparities, patient-physician communication, neuropsychology and mental health. She earned dual bachelor degrees with honors as the first deaf graduate from Johns Hopkins University and previously worked at the Johns Hopkins Environment, Energy, Sustainability & Health Institute.



CHANGING
Maryland
for the Better

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