

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING



ANNUAL REPORT: JULY 1, 2020 - JUNE 30, 2021



FY 21

odhh.maryland.gov | odhh@maryland.gov

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Larry Hogan
Governor



Boyd Rutherford
Lt. Governor



Kelby Brick
Director

GOVERNOR'S LETTER

LARRY HOGAN

Governor

Maryland State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401



Dear Fellow Marylanders,

I am pleased to share with you the 2021 Annual Report prepared by the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

The past year was filled with many challenges for Maryland and for the country as a whole. Despite this, I have seen many members of the community band together to provide support through the hurdles facing our state and nation. I am grateful for the diligent efforts of the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to improve access and quality of life among our 1.2 million Deaf and hard of hearing Maryland residents.

Over the past year, the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has worked tirelessly with the Vaccine Equity Task Force to expand vaccination access among the Deaf and hard of hearing community. We are also proud to announce that we've rolled out Text-to-911 capabilities statewide, so that individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities are able to receive emergency assistance.

Within my capacity as the Governor of Maryland, I am committed to the three priorities of the Office, from improving the quality of accessibility to expanding opportunities within the workforce for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Onwards to another year of a more prosperous Maryland!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larry Hogan". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Larry Hogan
Governor

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

KELBY BRICK, ESQ., CDI

Director

Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032



Dear Friends,

The Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GODHH) is proud to present our Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2021.

Our Office has prioritized the health and safety of our community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and has responded accordingly to this need. We've worked to expand access to COVID-19 testing and mass vaccination sites through the implementation of ASL and pro-tactile accessible sites along with assistive technology for captioning and other forms of services. We've worked to combat COVID-19 misinformation through the dissemination of informative video series about the virus and the vaccination process. We've worked to ensure ASL interpretation of press conferences and keep the Deaf and hard of hearing community apprised of updates through ASL video debriefs of the press conferences. And we've worked with community leaders to host town hall meetings to keep the public informed.

It is because of the collaborative efforts of the Maryland government and its residents that our state currently sees one of the highest vaccination rates in the nation. This success is also evident in the Deaf community, as shown through a recent nationwide survey assessing the experiences in information access regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. This survey conducted by the Health Signs Center revealed strengths in Maryland's performance with Deaf Marylanders responding more favorably in nearly all categories of the COVID-19 access survey including interpreting and captioning access at press conferences, trustworthiness in American Sign Language-translated online information, the provision of qualified Deaf interpreters, and the state's inclusivity of the Deaf in emergency preparedness.

We are also proud to announce the statewide rollout of text-to-911, which allows Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders to text 911 in the event of an emergency. This is a monumental accomplishment and we can feel safer knowing this will lead to swifter emergency responses. The Governor's Office is dedicated to making Maryland a better place for 1.2 million Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders to live, work, raise a family, and retire. Our work will never be complete, but we are proud of our ongoing successes. As the Office greets FY22, we continue to be a leader for our nation in access to education, jobs and support of the Deaf Ecosystem in changing Maryland for the better.

Warmly,

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

Kelby Brick, Esq., CDI
Director

GOVERNOR'S COORDINATING OFFICES

In Maryland, the Governor's Coordinating Offices directly serve as agents of the Governor. Each office holds specific knowledge and expertise in different fields, allowing for close collaboration, coordination, and information sharing with agencies and other entities across the state. In turn, the Governor has access to real-time knowledge of Marylanders' needs.

The tasks and priorities of the Governor's Coordinating Offices are aligned with the Governor's agenda. Similar to the Governor's Cabinet, the Coordinating Offices have a strong influence across state entities, departments, and agencies, allowing for extensive collaboration and consulting.

Governor's Grants Office

Governor's Office of Community Initiatives

Governor's Office of Service and Volunteerism

Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, & Victim Services

Governor's Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs

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

To learn more about the work and duties of the Governor's Coordinating Offices, please visit: governor.maryland.gov/governors-coordinating-office.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Maryland Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GODHH) 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.

The Office believes that all Maryland constituents 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

GODHH's priorities include the following:

DEAF ECOSYSTEM

Expanding the Deaf Ecosystem.

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

Addressing fraudulent and unqualified interpreters in the state of Maryland.

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.

DEAF ECOSYSTEM

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.

Building 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 experienced within 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 the economic mobility and purchasing power 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. This includes fostering an inclusive entrepreneurial environment that empowers Deaf and hard of hearing people to realize their potential without any barriers. Other examples of the Deaf Ecosystem includes supporting 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 collectively than they can individually.

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 constituents. Social, political, and economic barriers no longer stand in the way, and discrimination is diminished.

Director Brick explains the concept and approach of the Deaf Ecosystem in this video: odhh.maryland.gov/deaf-ecosystem.

DEAF & HARD OF HEARING BUSINESS OWNERS

Maryland is home to many businesses owned and operated by Deaf and hard of hearing people, and this rate is ever-growing. These businesses have actively hired and promoted Deaf and hard of hearing employees, contributing to a robust Deaf Ecosystem in Maryland.

To further support Maryland's Deaf and hard of hearing entrepreneurs and small business owners, the Office regularly meets with them and makes visits at incubators. Additionally, the Office developed a video series of #MarylandDeafEcosystem spotlights featuring Deaf-owned businesses and their services. These videos are shared via social media to inspire patronage for these businesses.

On a daily basis, the Office connects state resources with Deaf and hard of hearing business owners. To share current resources and connect business owners with the Deaf and hard of hearing community and Maryland at large, the Office maintains and updates a directory of Maryland Deaf and hard of hearing owned businesses at odhh.maryland.gov/directory/#dhhbizs.



DEAF & HARD OF HEARING EMPLOYEES AND JOB SEEKERS

To ensure that all Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders have an equal footing in employment, GODHH shares current and upcoming key state employment resources such as those from the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), Telecommunication Access of Maryland, Maryland School for the Deaf, the Department of Disabilities, the Department of Health, and Deaf Culture Digital Library (DCDL), among other agencies.

The Office has frequently encouraged state agencies to hire Deaf and hard of hearing employees and contractors, especially those that serve Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. A part of this includes highlighting or emphasizing specific expertise or skillsets that have historically been ignored or undervalued by employers. This has resulted in more job postings that require ASL fluency. Several recent postings include the Superintendent of the Maryland School for the Deaf, the Statewide Coordinator of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services at DORS, the DCDL Coordinator, correctional officials at the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), and the Maryland Relay Manager. Many of these postings have since been filled, but DPSCS continues to seek ASL-fluent correctional officials to work with Deaf inmates.

These initiatives have contributed to the reduction of unemployment rates in Maryland. Such statistics show that the Deaf Ecosystem is working, and may be the best approach to elevate the employment rates of Deaf and hard of hearing individuals anywhere in the country. The Office is working on gathering data for all Deaf and hard of hearing state employees with the aim of hosting the state's first Deaf State Employee Summit.



SIGN LANGUAGE 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 by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), who sets the minimum standards for interpreting.

Certification of sign language interpreters is extremely important to protect entities from liability exposure 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 go to:

www.marylandcdl.org/topic/services/interpreting.

The Office has promoted the growth and use of the Deaf Interpreter profession by ensuring that Deaf Interpreters are used in state emergency broadcasts in Maryland, including the Governor's State of the State address, public official meetings, situations that involve the mental health setting, and meetings that involve children or DeafBlind constituents. Native or near-native fluency in various American Sign Language (ASL) dialects is critical and necessary for different interpreting situations. Deaf Interpreters are the most qualified people to provide high-quality services because ASL is their primary and native language.

CENTRALIZED INTERPRETING FUND

GODHH has conducted research on ways to increase fiscal responsibility and improve the efficiency and quality of sign language interpreting services within state departments and agencies in Maryland. The Office worked with the Department of Budget and Management to create a new comptroller code for all state agencies to use to record their expenditure activity on sign language interpreting services.

The standard use of a single code will begin to enable an accurate assessment of cost savings and aid in the fiscal evaluation of establishing a centralized source for state procurement of sign language interpreter services. Preliminary findings indicate the potential for cost-savings under a centralized budget while making the state government more efficient and responsive.

ADDRESSING INTERPRETING QUALIFICATIONS

In the past years, the Office has received numerous complaints and concerns about unqualified and fraudulent sign language interpreters from constituents and businesses across Maryland. 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. This leads to the deprivation of knowledge, miscommunication, and isolation from the 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 and the Office of Health Care Quality for follow-up.

In FY19, the Office staff attended numerous town halls hosted by the community and participated in national conferences on interpreter quality and fraudulence. The Office has been working to address many of these issues internally. In the meantime, the importance of RID-certified and qualified interpreters and Certified Deaf Interpreters have been a widespread message.

In FY20, the Maryland Legislature has been looking at ways to protect Deaf and hard of hearing individuals from fraudulent and unqualified interpreters. They asked the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to provide a response on ways to protect and serve users of sign language interpreting services. The response was submitted on September 1, 2020, outlining multiple elements that should be considered when identifying the best policy options. These elements were used to identify a continuum of five strategic options to address this critical issue. An ASL video recap and response is available to view at www.odhh.maryland.gov/JCR2020.

In FY21, the Office released a new survey collecting data on unqualified interpreters. The intent of this form is to shape the Maryland Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing's approach to current interpreting requirements in Maryland.

The link to the form can be found at bit.ly/interpretingsurvey.

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. In FY16, the Office developed and distributed a memorandum to media outlets in Maryland regarding the on-screen framing of the speaker and interpreter. This memorandum can be found at www.odhh.maryland.gov/broadcasts.

Several recommendations were made, such as ensuring that the interpreter is fully on-screen rather than being cropped off-screen. The Hogan Administration has continued to demonstrate its commitment to accessibility for all Deaf and hard of hearing people including ensuring that press conferences are captioned and interpreted, including by qualified Deaf Interpreters.

In FY20 and FY21, the Office continued to distribute this critical message as they worked with the Governor's Office, Department of Health, and Maryland Emergency Management Agency during COVID-19, becoming a model for the country. The White House has started providing sign language interpreters using a Deaf interpreter team for their press conferences, relying on the interpreter pool trained and developed by GODHH.



IMPROVEMENT OF STATE SERVICES

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 various 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 with language delays or no language at all, putting them at a disadvantage that sometimes continues for the rest of their lives. This is because those children have not had access to ASL as their visual language, which supports their English proficiency.

Not providing children early access to language has been an ongoing and recognized issue at the local and national levels, and in Maryland's Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Advisory Council, which is composed of parents, professionals, Deaf and hard of hearing individuals, and a GODHH representative.

Given that 90-95% of Deaf and hard of hearing infants are born to hearing parents who often have very little to no knowledge or command of ASL, it is critical that we develop strong 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.

IMPROVEMENT OF STATE SERVICES

In the passing of SB677 (Support for Parents) in the 2019 Legislative Session, the Hearing Aid Loan Bank has been renamed the Hearing Aid and Language and Communication Video Loan Bank.

The Office will assist MSDE to expand the bank to include videos and resources to help families learn ASL to communicate with their child. To learn more, go to <https://bit.ly/loan-bank>.

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (MDH)

The Office works closely with MDH with several of its departments and programs, including the Behavioral Health Administration, Developmental Disabilities Administration, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention, and the Office of Health Care Quality, which are detailed on pages 14 through 16.

Behavioral Health Administration (BHA)

The Office serves on the statewide Behavioral Health Administration Advisory Council (BHAC) and chairs the Cultural and Linguistic Competence (CLC) Committee. The committee works on promoting and advocating for a culturally competent and comprehensive approach in Maryland's system.

Through the committee and other departments, the Office works on ensuring that Deaf and hard of hearing individuals are able to access quality behavioral health services.

In early 2016, the CLC committee proposed to draft a CLC plan as an instrumental effort to address the severe lack of cultural and linguistic competency among providers within the behavioral and mental field. Numerous drafts were developed throughout the years and the CLC plan was officially adopted and went into effect several months later in FY20.

In a corresponding move, BHA began offering CLC seminars across Maryland to educate LBHA/PBS/LAA about the importance of ensuring patients receive

IMPROVEMENT OF STATE SERVICES

appropriate services from professionals with cultural and linguistic competency. The CLC committee has expanded to reflect representation across the State of Maryland through membership recruitment including parents of child with disabilities, caregivers, educators, therapists, social workers, members of underserved populations including Native Americans. In May 2019, the CLC committee developed a vision statement: “Maryland behavioral health services will address systemic inequities, will be accessible, grounded in cultural humility, and responsive to the experiential and linguistic needs of each individual.”

In FY20, the CLC committee has preliminary established a criteria for appropriate review of CLC plans, how to best provide appropriate input, and offer consistent support to BHA in this capacity to maintain robust relations with LBHA/PBS/LAA.

In FY21, GODHH Policy Manager Kate Breen joined the CLC Committee, becoming the fourth Deaf staff member from GODHH with plans to become a co-chair. With the pandemic and the departures of two previous co-chairs, CLC is several months behind in tasks to organize seminars with county LBHA/PBS/LAA officials as a follow up on self-evaluation. A conference originally scheduled for June 2021 was postponed to 2022; the exact date is yet to be determined and will depend on funding and the availability of presenters.

Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)

The Office has provided technical assistance to DDA with regards to the areas of support services for Deaf individuals with developmental disabilities. DDA has developed a survey to collect information from over 100 providers in Maryland and the anticipated data analysis will be conducted to identify gaps in the areas of services.

Early Hearing Detection & Intervention (EHDI)

The Maryland Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (MD EHDI) Program aims to ensure that every baby born in Maryland receives the newborn hearing screening and that hearing status is identified at the earliest age possible, preferably by 3 months of age.

IMPROVEMENT OF STATE SERVICES

The MD EHDI Program coordinates with providers statewide to help ensure that babies who are identified as deaf or hard of hearing receive early intervention services, preferably by 6 months of age.

Director Kelby Brick represents the Office on the MD EHDI Advisory Council, focusing on combating language deprivation by working to ensure that every family receives access to visual language services immediately.

Office of Health Care Quality (OHCQ)

The Office works closely with OHCQ in various capacities and frequently refers constituents to file formal complaints with OHCQ for appropriate response. OHCQ licenses and certifies facilities and programs throughout Maryland. OHCQ surveys these facilities and programs to determine compliance with state and federal regulations, which sets forth minimum standards for the delivery of care.

DEAF CULTURE DIGITAL LIBRARY (DCDL)

The Deaf Culture Digital Library (DCDL) is a one stop information center that provides Maryland residents, local public library staff, college and university librarians, and other libraries with access to online resources on Deaf culture, Deaf cultural programs, and training programs for library staff. DCDL is one of the only three departments with a statutory requirement that the lead administrator be Deaf or hard of hearing with appropriate expertise.

The Office works closely with DCDL to provide guidance and assistance. Program and Communications Manager Sonya Smith served on DCDL's advisory board in FY21. In May 2021, DCDL celebrated its 5 year anniversary and co-developed a video with the Office to announce a new contract with a Deaf owned website developer (Eyeth Studios) to redesign the DCDL website and put it on an independent server. In September 2020, after Coordinator Susan Cohen retired, Montgomery County Public Libraries posted a job opening for a new coordinator, requiring the person filling the position to be Deaf or hard of hearing. The Office worked with DCDL to promote the position and interview candidates. In FY21, DCDL's home library relocated from Germantown to Rockville, and in early FY22, DCDL hired Brandt Van Unen as their first full time Coordinator.

IMPROVEMENT OF STATE SERVICES

DEAFBLIND SERVICES

GODHH continues to advocate for improved access to services for DeafBlind Marylanders. The Office sits on several work groups in different state agencies, including Maryland Relay, the Division of Rehabilitation Services, and the Department of Disabilities. Maryland Relay's work group focuses on strengthening telecommunications access for DeafBlind constituents while the Division of Rehabilitation Services' work group works towards finding effective ways for the community and partners to provide specialized and sustainable services to help increase economic self-sufficiency and competitive employment outcomes for DeafBlind Marylanders.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

The Office received concerns from constituents about accessibility at Workforce Centers across the state of Maryland. Collaborative work is ongoing between the Office and Department of Labor to ensure on-site interpreting and video remote interpreting access at all sites as well as cultural competency training. GODHH is working with DOL and DORS to identify apprenticeship opportunities for the Deaf and hard of hearing.

MARYLAND INSURANCE ADMINISTRATION (MIA)

The Office routinely refers constituents to the Maryland Insurance Administration for issues with health insurance, and collaborated with the agency to work on initiatives for Deaf constituents to receive direct services with out-of-network providers who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or fluent in ASL to be covered by the in-network cost.

MARYLAND COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS (MCCR)

The Office referred constituents to file formal complaints with MCCR, provided information about the process, and operated as a person of contact for technical assistance in appropriate areas, including employment discrimination. Jeff Rosen, Esq., a Deaf lawyer, was appointed to serve on the Commission for a six-year term. The Commissioners' duties are found at mccr.maryland.gov/Pages/Commissioners.aspx.

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES (MDOD)

The Office provided technical assistance for MDOD's various projects including emergency preparedness and MDOD's Telecommunication Access of Maryland.

IMPROVEMENT OF STATE SERVICES

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (DHS)

The Office has referred Deaf constituents in need of public assistance to the Department of Human Services.

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES (DPSCS)

The Office and DPSCS worked together in various capacities from the human resources department, training commissions, and law enforcement services such as ensuring compliance with the settlement emanating from the Jarboe, et al v. Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), et al, settlement in the U.S. District Court of Maryland.

The Office established a relationship with DPSCS to learn about police academies as well as the overall function of licensing and training. Office staff observed one of their training classes that specifically focuses on interacting with individuals with intellectual and emotional disabilities. Opportunities for improvements in the area of serving Deaf constituents have been identified in the area of learning objectives which are to be established by the commission.

MARYLAND DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES (DORS)

The Office assisted with recruitment promotion of employment opportunities, distributed information about enacted statutory laws, and supported the DORS in various areas relating to the Deaf Ecosystem.

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (DHCD)

GODHH and the Department of Housing Community Development began working together to identify state funds available for housing while discussing the best model as appropriate for the State of Maryland.

MARYLAND MOTOR VEHICLE ADMINISTRATION (MVA)

The Office and Maryland Vehicle Administration collaborated to address the quality of services for Deaf constituents and provided technical assistance in the area of accessibility.

IMPROVEMENT OF STATE SERVICES

BALTIMORE VICTIM WITNESS UNIT

The Office provided the Baltimore City's Victim Witness Unit with appropriate resources and provided technical assistance in terms of ensuring interpreters being arranged are certified themselves and emphasized the importance of using certified Deaf Interpreters in case of interaction with minors as well as Deaf individuals with limited literacy.

PUBLIC WORKS FREDERICK

The Office made an appropriate referral on behalf of DeafBlind constituents to the Public Works Frederick for safety improvements within the City of Frederick including installment of sidewalks, new signals, and various conditions as applicable. Public Works Frederick works closely with Frederick Police, Traffic Engineering, and Department of Public Works - Traffic Lines.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACCESS

Ensuring the safety of Maryland's Deaf and hard of hearing citizens is a top priority for the Office. In the past year, the state has worked on updating 1960s-era emergency systems by setting up text-to-911 infrastructure to roll out to the counties' public safety answering point (PSAP) locations. Emergency calls are received and handled at the counties' PSAPs. Frederick County, where Maryland School for the Deaf is located, was the first county in Maryland to adopt the text-to-911 technology in 2015. Text-to-911 has since been rolled out statewide to be available to all residents who need this service.

According to an Abell Foundation report on the digital divide in Maryland, "520,000 Maryland households, or about one in four, do not have a home wireline broadband subscription." This includes some 108,000 households with children under the age of 18 and is disproportionately African American, Hispanic, and people with disabilities. With the majority of the country's population now using cell phones instead of landline phones and that 70% of 911 calls coming from cellular users, it is critical that all citizens, especially Deaf and hard of hearing individuals, are able to text 911 for emergencies. In addition to being able to text 911, access to high-speed internet is critical for Deaf and hard of hearing residents who use videophones to make and receive phone calls.

IMPROVEMENT OF STATE SERVICES

In FY18, Governor Hogan announced a public-private partnership with Microsoft Corp. and Declaration Networks Group, Inc (DNG) to expand rural broadband access in Garrett County, Maryland. To read the full press release, please see <https://bit.ly/md-broadband-press-release> and to view the corresponding ASL video please see <https://bit.ly/md-broadband-video>.

In FY20, Maryland Relay was rehomed to the Department of Disabilities. The Office assisted with the transition from the Department of Information Technology. Legislative changes in this process included the requirements of:

- The Director shall be an individual who is Deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, or speech disabled and is a user of telecommunications relay services.
- The Director shall advise the Department and the Secretary of Disabilities on regulatory policy and the administration of the Universal Service Trust Fund.

In FY20 and 21, K-12 schools and universities transitioned to virtual learning, limiting some individuals' access to education. To address the digital divide among students, especially Deaf and hard of hearing students, the Governor in June of 2020 announced \$45 million in educational funding, as announced in this press release:

<https://bit.ly/md-educational-funding>. In August of 2020, Director Brick provided a summary of the Governor's press conference announcing Broadband assistance as provided by the CARES act, which can be found here: <https://bit.ly/md-cares-act>.

GODHH also shared a video created by FCC with guidelines in applying for broadband access at a reduced cost, which is found at <https://bit.ly/broadband-asl>. Access to affordable and reliable internet service is critical for the Maryland Deaf and hard of hearing community to fully participate and thrive in the digital economy.

HEARING ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY BOARD

In 2019, Maryland passed legislation requiring facilities and buildings receiving state funds to install a hearing loop system during renovation or construction. The Hearing Accessibility Advisory Board (HAAB) has been established under the Department of General Services to help provide oversight of this legislation. The role of HAAB is to monitor compliance and in accordance with the legislation, consult with stakeholders, make recommendations, and investigate filed complaints.

COLLABORATION WITH ORGANIZATIONS

HAAB also considers waivers from the legislation submitted by companies and individuals. Policy Manager Kate Breen currently sits on the Board, of whom include individuals who use hearing loop systems, organizations that represent people with hearing loss and have background, experience and knowledge of the use of assistive listening systems and devices and experts within the field.

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

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE AGENCIES OF THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING (NASADHH)

The National Association of State Agencies of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NASADHH) functions as the national voice of state agencies serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. Along with the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH), the Office helped sponsor and organize NASADHH's 2019 annual meeting that took place in both Maryland and Washington, DC. The Office and VDDHH also represents NASADHH at the monthly Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network (DHHCAN) national meetings.

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSTITUTE & BANK OF AMERICA

The Office was chosen as one of three state representatives (along with Texas and Utah) across the country to serve as a lead partner in the Financial Empowerment Initiative. The initiative seeks to make financial education and services more ASL-accessible and expand awareness and application of financial capacity strategies within the Deaf community.

Topics are selected based on the needs of the Deaf community and may include becoming banked, budgeting, repairing credit, work incentives counseling, and addressing other financial challenges. All projects will also learn about the benefits of becoming Achieving Better Life Experience (ABLE) account owners. The Office's financial education videos can be found at www.odhh.maryland.gov/financial-education.

COLLABORATION WITH ORGANIZATIONS

BALTIMORE CITY ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF (BCAD)

BCAD is a new Maryland organization that seeks to provide advocacy and services to the Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing individuals in Baltimore City. The Office provides support to the organization as needed. BCAD was also a collaborator in hosting Legislative Awareness Day (LAD) 2020.

HOWARD COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF (HCAD)

HCAD serves and represents the Deaf community in Howard County and has been a long-time advocate in matters regarding accessibility to legislation. The Office provides support to the organization as needed. HCAD was also a collaborator in hosting LAD 2020.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF (PGCAD)

PGCAD is a new Maryland organization with the goal of enhancing the quality of Deaf residents in Prince George's County. The Office provides support to the organization as needed. PGCAD was also a collaborator in hosting LAD 2020.

REGULAR EXTERNAL MEETINGS AND COUNCILS

The Office regularly participates and contributes in meetings and serves on various councils including:

- Early Hearing Detection and Intervention
- Behavioral Health Advisory Council
- Cultural and Linguistic Competency Committee
- Deaf Culture Digital Library
- Maryland Alliance of Disability Commissions and Committees
- Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy
- NASADHH Network Monthly Meetings
- Howard County Commission on Disabilities
- Community College of Baltimore County - Catonsville ASL and Interpreter
- Program Advisory Council
- Maryland State Department of Education

LEGISLATIVE AWARENESS DAY

2020

The Legislative Awareness Day (LAD) is an annual event aimed at improving the Deaf and hard of hearing community's awareness on legislative issues, as well as promoting conversations about issues affecting Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. We also honor notable community leaders and advocates for their contributions and their tireless work. To host the 11th annual LAD, the Office worked with the Associations of the Deaf of Baltimore City, Howard County, and Prince George's County.

In addition to the awards ceremony, this two-evening virtual special discussed best practices on protecting and serving users of sign language interpreting services in Maryland with four sign language interpreting licensure experts: Ritchie Bryant, CDI; Sheryl D. Emery, M.A.; Shane H. Feldman; and Bobbie Beth Scoggins, Ed.D. In addition to a community town hall hosted by Director Kelby Brick, the LAD welcomed speakers Howard County Senator Guy Guzzone, who discussed the legislative and budget process, and Lieutenant Governor Boyd K. Rutherford, who congratulated the 11 award honorees, including Kirsten Poston who was personally recognized by the governor for her dedication to the community.



LAD 2020 HONOREES



LAD 2020 HONOREES



2020 ELECTION

VOTING OUTREACH EFFORTS

Between August and October, GODHH posted an eight video series about various 'How-To' related to voting in Maryland, such as registering for in-person or by mail-in ballot, status, and meeting deadlines. The series can be found in GODHH's YouTube playlist entitled "How To Vote" or via this link: <https://bit.ly/md-how-to-vote>.

In addition to the video series, GODHH shared election related information from the Department of Health (voting safely) and Governor Hogan's social media accounts.



CENTER FOR DEMOCRACY IN DEAF AMERICA PANEL

On September 23, 2020 Director Brick was one of the guest panelists for Center for Democracy in Deaf America's (CDDA) second half of the virtual event, "Why Vote? How to Vote?" to discuss the importance and benefits of voting as a Deaf or hard of hearing voter, a minority group. In addition to CDDA, National Association of the Deaf, SignVote, Communication Services for the Deaf, Deaf Poor People's Campaign, and Gallaudet Youth Programs co-hosted the virtual panel.

The recording of the event can be found at <https://bit.ly/cddapanel>.



2020 CENSUS

A collaborative state effort was put into the planning and outreach of the Maryland Census 2020. When the census campaign plan was announced, the Office collaborated with the Department of Planning to ensure the census was accessible for Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders and created an ASL video announcement.

In March 2020, Lt. Governor Rutherford hosted a press conference to kick off the 2020 Census in Maryland. The press conference was conducted with support from various state offices including GODHH. The Office arranged for Certified Deaf Interpreting teams for census-related press conferences and helped push out campaigns via social media and newsletters.

In addition to the initial ASL video announcement, our Office created several videos to inform Deaf and hard of hearing state residents of the importance of the Census and we shared updates as we received them from the state. GODHH also shared several posts from Maryland Census 2020 and the US Census Bureau, in addition to various video clips and social media posts with deadline reminders to complete the census.

The State's efforts resulted in more than 2.2 million households counted and a 99.9% total response rate, exceeding the 2010 rate. "The participation of 2.2 million Maryland households will mean critical federal funding for our state over the next decade for services used by our citizens every single day—from meals to Medicare and health care to highways.

"I want to sincerely thank all of the community leaders and volunteers who helped make this a successful Census for the State of Maryland," said Governor Hogan.



<https://bit.ly/md-census>

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

When the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic reached Maryland, the Hogan administration managed the state's response by being transparent, keeping Marylanders fully informed, taking actions based on detailed planning, and making decisions based on the facts on the ground. By establishing the standard for accessible press conferences to keep constituents informed, the Office has provided technical assistance to other states in emulating Maryland's model.

The Office worked with multiple stakeholders to ensure accessible information and services for 1.2 million Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders. A few examples are included below.

COVID-19 PRESS CONFERENCES

The Office coordinated accessibility for the Governor's press conferences, including:

- Certified Deaf Interpreting team at Governor Hogan's press conferences
- Real-time CART captioner at Hogan's press conferences
- ASL video recaps with major takeaways after press conferences, accessible with captions, visual description, and a transcript

OUTREACH

The Office posted hundreds of social media posts related to the pandemic such as restrictions, masks, updates on vaccines, hate crimes against the Asian-American community, announcements of mass vaccination events. We also featured community leaders in Maryland's Deaf and hard of hearing organizations and GODHH's own Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in our ASL videos that discuss the importance of wearing masks, social distancing, and getting vaccinated.

The Office also hosted a COVID-19 Discussion Panel in mid-May consisting of various Deaf and hard of hearing leaders, and a specialist in infectious diseases from Gallaudet University. The panel mainly addressed the pandemic and the vaccine hesitancy and concerns. Earlier in the month, GODHH provided accommodations at a free drive through COVID-19 vaccine clinic organized by Kennedy Krieger Institute and Johns Hopkins Medicine.

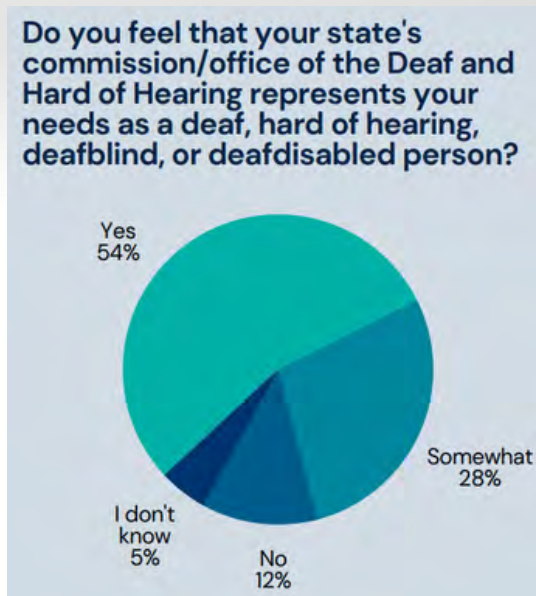
COVID-19 PANDEMIC

HEALTH SIGNS SURVEY

As a result of the Office's diligent efforts, Maryland is the lead state among 10 states in equitable access for the Deaf and hard of hearing during the pandemic based on Health Signs Center nationwide survey: www.healthsignscenter.org/covid19survey

Results revealed strengths in Maryland's performance with Deaf Marylanders responded more favorably in nearly all categories of the COVID-19 access survey including interpreting and captioning access at press conferences, trustworthiness in American Sign Language-translated online information, the provision of qualified Deaf interpreters, and the state's inclusivity of the Deaf in emergency preparedness.

Overall, the Health Signs Center survey showed 54% of Deaf Marylanders said they felt their needs were represented by the state Deaf and hard of hearing office, while only 25% of those surveyed from all ten states felt this way. On knowing where to find COVID-19 testing, Marylanders were more likely to know this information (88%) compared to the survey average (80%), and Maryland showed significant performance in providing Deaf interpreters with 89% of respondents indicating so, while only 62% of the surveyed population received access through Deaf interpreters.



A large part in Maryland's success in informing its Deaf and hard of hearing constituents of the COVID-19 pandemic is also due to the Maryland Department of Disabilities and the Maryland Department of Human Services, who deployed accessible emergency preparedness kits to all of Maryland's mass vaccination centers complete with communication devices and tablets with multiple video remote interpreter (VRI) sites preloaded. "This is the largest emergency deployment of assistive technology we have done in Maryland," said MDOD Secretary Carol A. Beatty. "We continue to work in partnership with our fellow state agencies to make communication accessible."

To view the full press release, go to <https://bit.ly/health-signs-press-release>.

MACDHH MEETINGS

The Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MACDHH) was established in October 2001 to advise and give support to the GODHH. 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.

Meetings are held quarterly, typically at the Crownsville office, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meetings were conducted virtually via Zoom and live streamed on Facebook. Our meetings are ASL interpreted, captioned, and set up with a hearing loop system. Additional accommodations such as tactile interpreting can be requested through the Office. Meetings hosted during FY21 can be viewed via the following links:

September 25, 2020

<https://bit.ly/macdhh-sept25>

March 12, 2021

<https://bit.ly/macdhh-mar12>

November 6, 2020

<https://bit.ly/macdhh-nov6>

June 7, 2021

<https://bit.ly/macdhh-june7>

December 14, 2020

<https://bit.ly/macdhh-dec14>

The Office plans to host the next meeting at the Crownsville office in the fall. To view upcoming advisory council meetings and prior meeting minutes, please visit odhh.maryland.gov/meetings



MACDHH MEMBERS

CHAIR

Michele Westfall

VICE CHAIR

Marny Helfrich

SECRETARY

Vikki Porter

CITIZEN REPRESENTATIVES

Dr. Bo A. Byun

Dr. Larry Gray

Norma Moran

Vikki Porter

Veronica Davila Steele

SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVES

Expertise in DHH Services

Fred Hartman

Expertise in DeafBlindness

Edwin Martinez, Jr.

Parent of a DHH Child

Michele Westfall

Private Agency Providing DHH Services

Dawn Padon

STATE AGENCIES

Commission on Civil Rights

S. Spencer Dove

Department of Human Services

Gregory S. James

Department of Aging

Dakota Burgess

Department of Labor

Kristen M. Patterson

Department of Education

Marny Helfrich

Department of Transportation

Dr. Janet Moye Cornick

Department of Health

Alena Troxel

Maryland School for the Deaf

Erin Buck Skees

Department of Housing and Community Development

Gordon M. Outlaw

TOWN HALL MEETINGS

As required by the GODHH enacting statute, the Office must host at least two public town hall meetings each year to gather 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 expanded the number of town hall meetings to a minimum of four meetings each year.

After each advisory council meeting, the Office hosts town hall meetings to promote engagement among council members and constituents, and for the office and council to gather feedback and gain a better understanding of the community's needs and concerns related to state issues and the Governor's priorities.

IN FY21, after the suspension of in-person town halls, GODHH held virtual town hall meetings on April 27 and May 24, which can be viewed via the following links:

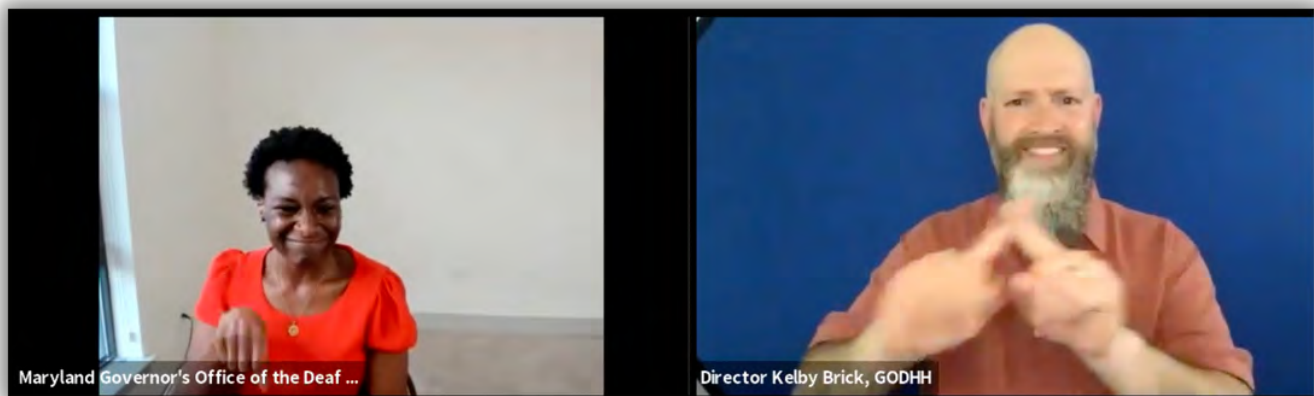
April 27, 2021

<https://bit.ly/townhall-april27>

May 24, 2021

<https://bit.ly/townhall-may24>

The Hogan-Rutherford administration gave permission to hold in-person meetings in the Fall of 2021, where we will be continuing vital dialogues with the community.



TOP VIDEOS

#MaskOnMaryland



<https://bit.ly/maskonmaryland>

Your Vote Counts!



<https://bit.ly/yourvotecounts-md>

Mail Back Ballot



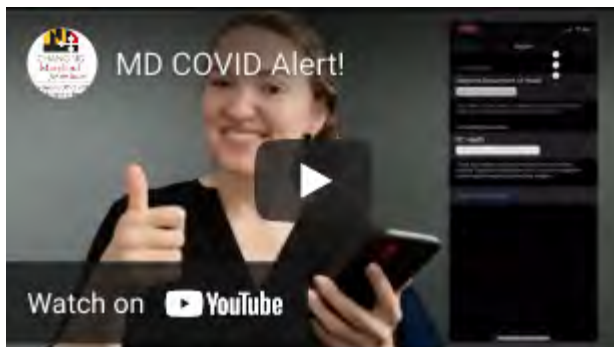
<https://bit.ly/mailbackballot>

International Day of Sign Languages



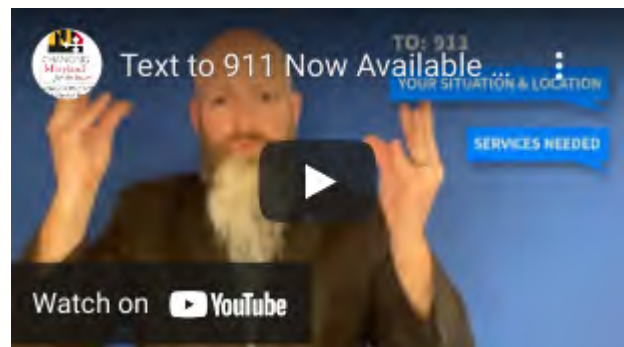
<https://bit.ly/intl-day-sign-languages>

Maryland COVID Alert



<https://bit.ly/mdcovidalert>

Text to 911 Available in Maryland



<https://bit.ly/md-text-to-911>

TOP VIDEOS

Maryland COVID-19 Update #65



<https://bit.ly/covidupdate65>

MACDHH Meeting- March 12, 2021



<https://bit.ly/macdhh-mar12>

How to Get the Vaccine



<https://bit.ly/howtogetvaccinated>

Post-Vaccination Safety



<https://bit.ly/postvaccinationsafety>

State Closures for Juneteenth



<https://bit.ly/juneteenth-md>

Maryland Stop Overdose Program



<https://bit.ly/stop-overdose-md>

STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

DIRECTOR KELBY BRICK



Kelby Brick led efforts in 2001 to establish the Maryland Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Most recently, Director Brick was a recipient of The Daily Record's 2019 Leadership in Law Award. In 2011, Brick was the first recipient of the Governor's Kelby Brick Community Leadership Award, which is given annually to deserving recipients.

Prior to becoming director of the Office in 2015, 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. 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 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 has been active in different 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. Kelby resides in Catonsville with his wife, Jill, and their four teenagers.

STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

POLICY MANAGER KATE BREEN



Kate Breen hails from Central New York, mainstreamed in the public school system until transferring to Model Secondary School for the Deaf for her junior year in high school. She received a Bachelor's degree in Government from Gallaudet University, Masters in International Studies from University of Limerick in Ireland, and her second Masters in International Development from Gallaudet University.

Kate's career paths vary from contractual jobs with the Institute on Disability and Public Policy at American University and United States International Council on Disabilities, as an ASL guide docent for New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Gallery of Art in the District. Kate also worked as a case manager for Deaf adults with developmental disabilities, managed a group home in New York, and worked as a Residential Specialist for Deaf REACH's group homes.

Prior to Kate's new position as Policy Manager for Maryland Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, she was an adjunct instructor and faculty at Gallaudet University for five years teaching international relations courses for both undergraduate and graduate students, as well as disability history and rights for general courses requirement.

Kate joined the Office in June 2021.

STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

PROGRAM AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER SONYA SMITH



Sonya Smith was born and raised in St. Louis, MO, graduating from Webster Groves High School as a four year honor roll student. She received a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Marketing from the Rochester Institute of Technology. At the 2017 National Black Deaf Advocates Convention in Baltimore, she was crowned Miss Black Deaf America and used her online platform to bring awareness to the Black Deaf community.

That year she also relocated to Maryland to work as Client Strategist at JM Davis Consultant Group, LLC where she supported clients with disabilities by working with them to find employment as well as working with corporations to break down with them to find employment as well as working with corporations to break down communications and other barriers for individuals with disabilities. She later became Account Manager for ZVRS/Purple Communications working to educate and assist clients in accessing Telecommunication Relay Services.

Holding on to ideals instilled by her mother to never give up despite challenges, Sonya embraces diversity and enjoys learning about different cultural beliefs and new perspectives while not giving into discrimination. Sonya continues to take advantage of opportunities to grow and to develop advanced leadership skills supported by family and friends. Sonya is very passionate about helping others to ensure that they are able to develop self-confidence, gain motivation to pursue their dreams, overcome barriers, and reject any boundaries or limits. Sonya is driven by deep faith and her spirituality.

Sonya joined the Office in March 2021 and left in November 2021.

STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

POLICY MANAGER JACOB SALEM



Jacob Salem was born in New Jersey but spent much of his formative years in Israel and Florida before moving to DC to obtain his Master's degree. Throughout his professional and academic career, he has held various leadership positions and advocated for increased access to employment, communication, and education. Jacob has worked to support the Deaf ecosystem and contributed his entrepreneurial skills to assist local businesses and entrepreneurs.

Jacob previously interned for Communication Service for the Deaf, working on projects connected with the Federal Communications Commission, Small Business Administration's 8(a) Business Development Program, Direct Video Communication, Telemedicine, Video Relay Services, Campus Accessibility, and Public Policy Hub.

Jacob holds a Master's degree in Public Administration from Gallaudet University, where he served as the President of Graduate Student Association. He also uses his Bachelor's degree in Political Science from University of Central Florida toward his career aspirations. Outside of his professional career, Jacob spends much of his leisure time exploring hidden gems in the area, trying out different cuisines, attending local events, and participating in self-improvement activities.

Jacob's time with the Office ended in Spring 2021.

STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

PROGRAM AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER TRACIANN HOGLIND



TraciAnn Hoglind is a passionate advocate for health equity and for the Deaf community. She handles policy work and office communications. Prior to joining our team in late January 2019, TraciAnn was a Health Access Project Specialist at the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. She also has a total of over 7 years of research and project management experience in public health, neuroscience, and policy.

TraciAnn graduated with a Master of Public Health degree from Boston University. She also holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology with a minor in Business Administration from Gallaudet University.

TraciAnn's time with the Office ended in Winter 2021.

STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT BETHANY NYMO-YANCE



Bethany Nymo-Yance grew up in Kentucky and graduated from Kentucky School for the Deaf. She received her Bachelor's degree at Gallaudet University. During her undergraduate years, she took on an internship at the Capitol Hill and worked under Gallaudet University President Bobbi Cordano. She is currently doing her graduate studies in the Public Administration program at Gallaudet University. Bethany aims to work with the government to advocate for the Deaf community to get them the resources they need to be successful.

Bethany joined the Office as a part-time contractual employee from March to June 2021.

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT KARINA BAKER



Karina Baker was born and raised in Los Angeles, California. She grew up within various educational settings, including public schools, DHH programs, and Deaf schools, and carries these experiences with her as she works with a variety of people in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. She obtained her undergraduate degree in Sociology & Anthropology with a minor in Public Policy at the Rochester Institute of Technology.

Karina is currently working toward two Master's degrees, Public Administration and International Development, at Gallaudet University. Several of her specialities include environmental justice, refugee advocacy, and governance. Prior to her role at the Office, she worked at the Deaf Poor People's Campaign under the Kairos Center as a Lead Intern and as the Chair of the Outreach & Mobilization committee, inspiring awareness and engagement in political discourse and human rights advocacy within the Deaf community.

Karina joined the Office as a part-time contractual employee from March to June 2021.

CHANGING MARYLAND FOR THE BETTER

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