



CHANGING  
**Maryland**  
*for the Better*

Governor's Office of the  
Deaf & Hard of Hearing

# ANNUAL REPORT

*Fiscal Year 2017*

July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017



**Larry Hogan**  
Governor



**Boyd K. Rutherford**  
Lt. Governor



**Kelby Brick**  
Director

# FY2017 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 Fellow Marylanders,

I am pleased to share with you the 2017 Annual Report prepared by the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Our administration is committed to making our state 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.

In 2017, I was proud that we hosted America's first Deaf Business Summit to promote entrepreneurship and empower small business ownership among Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders. Our administration is committed to creating jobs in our communities and making meaningful progress in growing our economy.

I look forward to the office continuing to expand opportunities and enhance the general welfare of Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders - from addressing interpreting quality in the state, to promoting the Deaf Ecosystem and making it easier for Deaf and hard of hearing business owners to succeed and thrive.

Together, we will change Maryland for the better.

Sincerely,

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

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  
gov.odhh@maryland.gov

Dear Friends,

The Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is pleased to present our Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2017.

This past year was a tremendous year for our office. It was a year of many firsts, from being the first state to expand teletherapy coverage for Deaf and hard of hearing constituents to hosting the country's first business summit for Maryland's Deaf and hard of hearing small business owners.

Access to language remained a top priority of our office, having worked with both the Department of Health and the State Department of Education to ensure that newly-identified Deaf and hard of hearing children receive accessible language immediately to avoid language delays.

Equally important to our office was ensuring that all Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders are able to access quality communication services. The office investigated the possibility of a centralized interpreting fund within the state, conducting extensive data analysis on the state's expenditure activity, and establishing new mechanisms to collect better data to determine the fund's feasibility.

The office also worked with community stakeholders to determine best avenues to ensure interpreting quality, not only within the state, but also within the community.

As the office enters the new year, we remain committed to 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



## 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*

**Allysa Dittmar** *Communications & Policy Manager*

**Deborah Nathanson** *Policy Manager*

**Amy Speer** *Program Manager (Departed November 2016)*



## **Governor's Coordinating Offices**

In Maryland, the six 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.

Staffed by politically-appointed individuals, 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 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 Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs**

**Governor's Office of Performance Improvement**

All six 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 the new webpage: [governor.maryland.gov/governors-coordinating-office](http://governor.maryland.gov/governors-coordinating-office).

# 1. Deaf Ecosystem

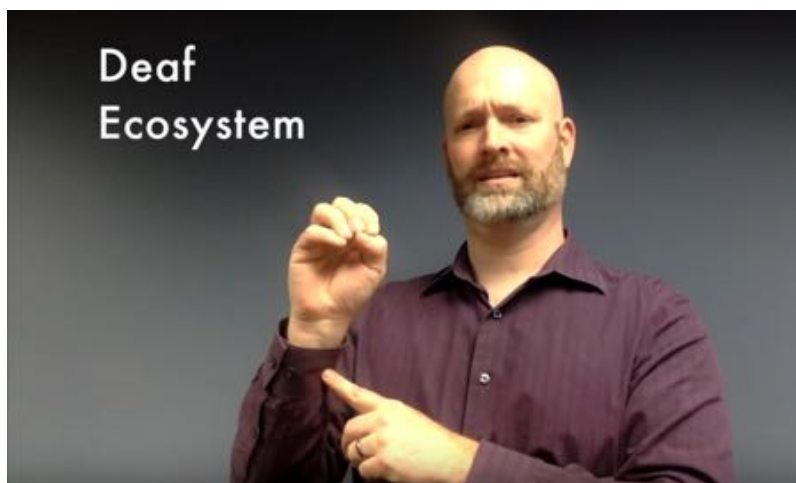
*Expanding the Deaf Ecosystem to support current and aspiring Deaf and hard of hearing business owners in Maryland to reduce underemployment and unemployment.*

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 diminished.



Director Kelby Brick explains the concept and approach of the Deaf Ecosystem in this vlog: [bit.ly/2y3ILTb](https://bit.ly/2y3ILTb).

## 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. On a daily basis, the office connects state resources with Deaf and hard of hearing business owners. The office also conducted a needs assessment in FY16 to determine Deaf and hard of hearing business owner needs and experiences in accessing state resources in Maryland.

Based on the needs assessment and feedback from various Deaf and hard of hearing business owners, the office hosted the nation's first Deaf Business Summit in May 2017 for established Deaf and hard of hearing business owners in Maryland.

To help connect business owners with the Deaf and hard of hearing community and Maryland at large, the office maintains a current directory composed of Deaf and hard of hearing business owners in Maryland. To view the listing, please see: [odhh.maryland.gov/directory/#deaf-hard-of-hearing-business-owners](http://odhh.maryland.gov/directory/#deaf-hard-of-hearing-business-owners).

## Deaf Business Summit

On May 3, 2017, the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing hosted the country's first Deaf Business Summit: "Deaf Ecosystem: Maryland's Open for Business." It was the first time that a governor has hosted an event exclusively for Deaf and hard of hearing business owners, supporting and encouraging entrepreneurship among the Deaf and hard of hearing business community. Over 60 Deaf and hard of hearing businesses attended the summit.

The event allowed Deaf and hard of hearing business owners to connect with key state entities, learn about different aspects of business ownership and enterprise available in Maryland, and network with state officials and programs. Public and private experts on small business conducted six workshops throughout the day on various topics including procedures and resources on licensing, leasing, procurement, and financing for small businesses in Maryland.

Three keynote speakers provided remarks, including Lt. Governor Boyd Rutherford at the summit's luncheon, Small Business Ombudsman Randall Nixon, and Director Kelby Brick. The summit closed with a business reception, featuring hors d'oeuvres and dessert provided by Deaf and hard of hearing chefs from Maryland.

To read the full press release, please see: [odhh.maryland.gov/press-releases/deaf-business-summit-2017/](http://odhh.maryland.gov/press-releases/deaf-business-summit-2017/).



Lt. Governor Boyd Rutherford shares his remarks with Deaf and hard of hearing business owners at the Deaf Business Summit, emphasizing Maryland's commitment to the Deaf Ecosystem.



“ [The] Deaf Business Summit is another example of our administration’s commitment to create greater economic opportunity for all Marylanders. We are excited to partner with companies owned by Deaf and hard of hearing individuals to create jobs in our communities and make meaningful progress in improving our economy.”

- Governor Larry Hogan



Clockwise from top left: Director Kelby Brick introduces Lt. Governor Boyd Rutherford; Lt. Governor Rutherford meets Deaf chefs; Rosemary Latin, creator of the summit’s Maryland-themed cake; and Small Business Ombudsman Randall Nixon listens to business owners’ feedback and concerns.

#DBSMD #DeafEcosystem



Clockwise from top right: Deaf chefs provided hors d'oeuvres during the business reception; crab-shaped cookies with Maryland-themed icing were provided by the Deaf-owned Murwell's Bakery; Lt. Boyd Rutherford with one of the Deaf chefs from ChicCrepes who provided the summit's lunch; a panel of Deaf and hard of hearing business owners answer attendees' questions; a workshop in session.

## 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 regularly connects Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders with key state employment programs and resources such as the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), the Department of Commerce, the Department of Assessments and Taxation, Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR), and Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD).

To be held in the beginning of FY18, the office will co-host three events with the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation and the Division of Rehabilitation Services in recognition of Governor Larry Hogan's declaration of October as Disability Employment Awareness Month in Maryland. The events will provide informational workshops and tours of different facility resources available for Deaf and hard of hearing job seekers and small business owners. To learn more about the events, please see: [odhh.maryland.gov/ndeam-2017/](http://odhh.maryland.gov/ndeam-2017/). To read the press release, please visit: [odhh.maryland.gov/press-releases/governor-larry-hogan-let-governor-boyd-rutherford-highlight-disability-employment/](http://odhh.maryland.gov/press-releases/governor-larry-hogan-let-governor-boyd-rutherford-highlight-disability-employment/).



In February 2017, Governor Larry Hogan presented a proclamation declaring February as “FeBREWary” in Maryland in celebration of the significant economic impact that craft brewing has had in Maryland. Present at the event were Deaf entrepreneurs who are in the process of opening up their own breweries, Mark Burke and Sam Costner of Streetcar 82 Brewing Co., and Jason Bailey and Amit Rupani of Seawolf Brewery.



## 2. Interpreting Quality

*Developing a policy framework to address fraudulent and unqualified interpreters.*

In the past two years, 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.

In FY17, the office worked with stakeholders to develop a policy framework to address fraudulent and unqualified sign language interpreters in Maryland. Numerous meetings with business owners, interpreters, constituents, and government officials were held.

Public forums addressing the issue were scheduled for the beginning of FY18, and the office hopes to have a policy framework in place by the end of the next fiscal year.

### **Centralized Interpreting Fund**

In accordance with Governor Hogan's agenda to improve state efficiency, the office conducted research on ways to improve the efficiency and quality of sign language interpreting services within state departments and agencies in Maryland, including the possibility of centralizing interpreting services within the state. Such centralization of funds would help ensure interpreting quality and efficiency in scheduling of interpreters.

While assessing the data on state spending for sign language interpreting services, cost savings of 10 to 15% could potentially be realized; however, the data was largely unreliable in part due to a lack of consistency of agencies' use of the same line item code used for sign language interpreting expenses. The office worked with the Department of Budget and Management to create a new comptroller code – 0834 Sign Language Interpreter Services – for all state agencies to use to record their expenditure activity on sign language interpreting services beginning July 1, 2017 (FY18). The standard use of a single code will help ensure consistency and allow the office to re-run models after two years of data collection. In doing so, the office will be able to re-assess state agencies' expenditure activity on sign language interpreting services and determine whether centralization of funds would be feasible and more efficient than the current system.

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, and continued to do so in FY17. The office also consistently guides state agencies on how to procure interpreters: [odhh.maryland.gov/resource-guide-state-procurement-of-sign-language-interpreting-services/](http://odhh.maryland.gov/resource-guide-state-procurement-of-sign-language-interpreting-services/).

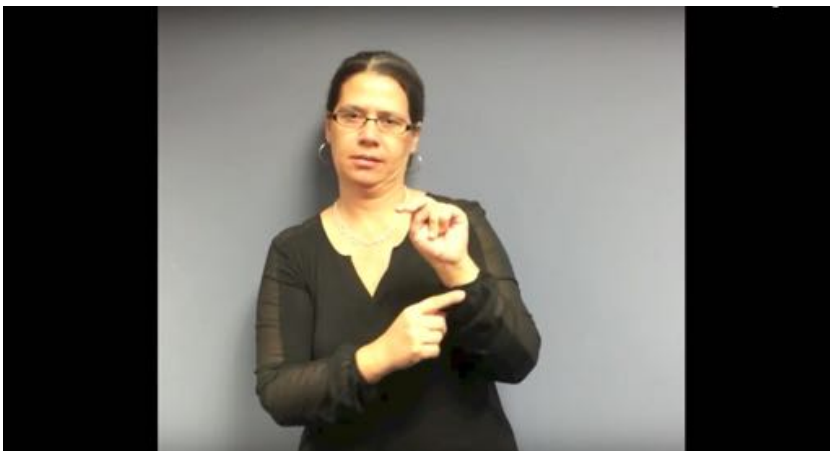
## The Need for Certified Interpreters

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, we suggest that the employer 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:

[odhh.maryland.gov/directory/#interpreting-communication-access](http://odhh.maryland.gov/directory/#interpreting-communication-access).

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, the Governor's State of the State address, 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.

In November 2016, the office and the Potomac Chapter made arrangements to cover the one-day registration costs for a Certified Deaf Interpreter to attend the Potomac Chapter of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf's conference. At the conference, Director Brick provided a workshop on state emergency platform interpreting in Maryland. The recipient of the scholarship to attend the conference was Julie Perry, a Certified Deaf Interpreter.



Julie Perry, recipient of the scholarship to attend the Potomac Chapter of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf's conference, recaps her experience attending the conference in this vlog: [bit.ly/2h4cohJ](https://bit.ly/2h4cohJ).

## 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. 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: [odhh.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2016/01/Broadcasting\\_Memo\\_ODHH.pdf](https://odhh.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2016/01/Broadcasting_Memo_ODHH.pdf).



An example of a Certified Deaf Interpreter team, with the interpreter fully visible in the camera frame, at a state emergency broadcast in March 2017 in response to the heroin and opioid epidemic.

L to R: Lieutenant Governor Boyd K. Rutherford, Governor Larry Hogan, Executive Director V. Glenn Fueston, Jr. of the Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention, and Executive Director Dr. Barbara Bazron of the Behavioral Health Administration.



### 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.

Not providing 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 is comprised of 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.

In FY16, the office worked with the Department of Health 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. In FY17, the letter was adopted and is now available in [American Sign Language](#), [English](#), and [Spanish](#).

The office also worked with the Maryland State Department of Education’s Division of Special Education and Early Intervention Services’ Infants and Toddlers program to ensure that Deaf and hard of hearing children receive appropriate early intervention services, especially pertaining to early language acquisition.

## 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 often refers constituents to the Department of Information Technology's Maryland Relay program.

When Maryland Relay launched its tablet program in the beginning of FY17, the office helped connect constituents to the new program. Over 400 tablets were distributed to qualified constituents in FY17. To read the full press release about the program, please visit: [governor.maryland.gov/2016/09/12/governor-hogan-announces-new-tablet-program-for-low-income-marylanders-with-disabilities/](http://governor.maryland.gov/2016/09/12/governor-hogan-announces-new-tablet-program-for-low-income-marylanders-with-disabilities/).



Director Kelby Brick and Maryland Relay's Director Brenda Kelly-Frey discuss the tablet program in this vlog: [bit.ly/2l0jCrz](http://bit.ly/2l0jCrz).

The office also 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 visit: [odhh.maryland.gov/resource-guide-insurance-and-financial-assistance-on-hearing-aids-cochlear-implants-and-audiology-services/](http://odhh.maryland.gov/resource-guide-insurance-and-financial-assistance-on-hearing-aids-cochlear-implants-and-audiology-services/).



Communications & Policy Manager Allysa Dittmar shared the office's policy priorities and resources with the Deaf Seniors Program in Anne Arundel County.

L to R: Program Leader Darlene Koontz, Rev. Leo Yates Jr., Allysa Dittmar, and Pastor Emily Smiley.



The office helped connect Maryland Deaf Senior Citizens, Inc. with Deaf Shalom Zone in Baltimore to explore the possible use of Deaf Shalom Zone's facility as a venue for community events and social gatherings.



## Behavioral Health Services

In the past two years, community mental health organizations and providers who serve Deaf and hard of hearing individuals have expressed common concerns including the lack of funding and access to behavioral health services, as well as the limited availability of local, culturally competent mental health providers who are fluent in American Sign Language (ASL).

To help close the gap and increase direct mental health services provided by providers who are culturally and linguistically competent, the office worked closely with the Department of Health in FY16 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 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 19<sup>th</sup> publication (Volume 43, Issue 17).

The office also serves on the statewide Behavioral Health Advisory Council, which focuses on ensuring that Maryland offers an integrated and coordinated behavioral health system. In FY17, Director Brick co-chaired the Cultural and Linguistic Competence Committee, in which the committee works on promoting and advocating for a culturally competent and comprehensive approach in Maryland's system. Through the committee, the office also works on ensuring that Deaf and hard of hearing individuals are able to access quality behavioral health services.

## Opioid and Heroin Crisis

On March 1, 2017, Governor Larry Hogan declared a state of emergency in response to the heroin, opioid, and fentanyl crisis affecting communities in Maryland and the United States. The Governor has allocated \$50 million in new funding to address the crisis. To read the full press release, please visit:

[governor.maryland.gov/2017/03/01/hogan-rutherford-administration-declares-state-of-emergency-announces-major-funding-to-combat-heroin-and-opioid-crisis-in-maryland/](http://governor.maryland.gov/2017/03/01/hogan-rutherford-administration-declares-state-of-emergency-announces-major-funding-to-combat-heroin-and-opioid-crisis-in-maryland/).

The office actively connects individuals who are struggling with addiction or need behavioral health services to local providers, organizations, and resources.



Director Kelby Brick provides a summary of Governor Hogan's state of emergency in this vlog: [bit.ly/2xTVo8i](https://bit.ly/2xTVo8i).

The office also helps connect related community organizations with appropriate state entities to ensure that treatment is accessible and funding is available.



**Deaf Addiction Services at Maryland (DASAM):**  
[umaryland.edu/dasam](http://umaryland.edu/dasam)

L to R: Communications & Policy Manager Allysa Dittmar; DASAM Addiction Counselor David Cruzan, LGPC; DASAM Clinical Supervisor Leo Yates Jr., LCPC; and Director Kelby Brick.

**Arundel Lodge, Inc. (ALI):**  
[arundellodge.org/programs/deaf-and-hard-of-hearing-services](http://arundellodge.org/programs/deaf-and-hard-of-hearing-services)

L to R: Director Kelby Brick, Communications & Policy Manager Allysa Dittmar, ALI Program Manager Dawn Padon, ALI Executive Director Mike Drummond, and Dr. Teresa Crowe,



**Community Support Services for the Deaf (CSSD):**  
[cssdinc.org](http://cssdinc.org)

L to R: CSSD Deputy Director Tammy Paige, CSSD Assistant Director Tammy Hill, CSSD Executive Director Kara Brown, Communications & Policy Manager Allysa Dittmar, and Director Kelby Brick.

## Domestic Violence

The office advocates for the expansion of services for Deaf and hard of hearing survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. The office also attended the Deaf Anti-Violence Coalition National Conference, where Director Brick discussed the importance of strengthening programs and services against violence and Policy Manager Deborah Nathanson also provided a workshop on how advocates can utilize state resources and services.

In October 2016, Governor Hogan announced more than \$2 million in federal Violence Against Women Act grants to fund efforts to help protect women and families from domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking crimes ([governor.maryland.gov/2016/10/27/governor-larry-hogan-announces-funding-to-fight-domestic-violence-sexual-assault-and-stalking-crimes/](http://governor.maryland.gov/2016/10/27/governor-larry-hogan-announces-funding-to-fight-domestic-violence-sexual-assault-and-stalking-crimes/)).



Policy Manager Deborah Nathanson providing a workshop on how to utilize available state resources and services in Maryland.

## 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 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. Maryland's Frederick County is the first county in Maryland to adopt the text-to-911 technology.

With the majority of the country's population now using cell phones instead of landline phones, it is critical that all citizens, especially Deaf and hard of hearing individuals, are able to text to 911 for emergencies.



A demonstration of how the text-to-911 process works at the Frederick County Division of Emergency Management's PSAP floor, where their emergency calls are received and handled.

## Health Insurance

In FY16, the office worked with Maryland Health Connection (MHC), Maryland's official health insurance marketplace, to ensure that the health insurance 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. MHC also developed a series of informational videos in American Sign Language:

- Picking the Right Health Plan <http://bit.ly/2i1I206>
- Can I Get a Tax Credit? <http://bit.ly/2yJ6Dxy>
- How to Calculate Household Size and Income <http://bit.ly/2zApfz2>

The ASL videos are also available through MHC's resource guide for Deaf and hard of hearing consumers, which was developed in FY17: [marylandhealthconnection.gov/health-coverage-deaf-hard-hearing-individuals/](http://marylandhealthconnection.gov/health-coverage-deaf-hard-hearing-individuals/). In February 2017, American Sign Language was included as one of the languages that applicants can choose as their preferred language during the online enrollment process.

## Healthcare Accessibility

The office provides information and resources on an ongoing basis to constituents who have difficulty accessing the healthcare system, including hospitals, doctor's offices, rehabilitation facilities, and nursing homes. The office receives numerous calls related to interpreting quality 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 by providing technical assistance.

The office also sits on the Disability Awareness and Support Advisory Committee for the Disability Awareness and Support program, which is a joint partnership between the Maryland Department of Disabilities and the Department of Health's Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Control. Because individuals with disabilities are three times more likely to have chronic disease and are less likely to participate in health prevention programs due to systematic barriers, it is critical that people with disabilities are able to access available health promotion programs. The Disability Awareness and Support program helps to ensure that Maryland's health promotions programs are accessible to people with disabilities while using evidence-based recommendations to help improve the health and well-being of all Marylanders with disabilities, including the Deaf and hard of hearing population.

## DeafBlind Services

The office actively advocates 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.

## Captioning and Visual Access

During this past fiscal year, the office worked with various agencies to ensure that their resources, content, and videos are captioned.

In both FY16 and FY17, the office worked with the Maryland Department of Transportation to ensure access to visual alerts for Deaf and hard of hearing riders for BaltimoreLink.

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: [bit.ly/2f6nzGQ](http://bit.ly/2f6nzGQ).

Additionally, the office worked on ensuring that emergency public announcement systems within train stations also have captioning integrated into the announcements.

At the end of FY17, the office adopted an innovative technology for captioning at meetings and public events in which the technology uses wireless, streamlined, real-time captioning that eliminates the need for a second screen to project the captions. By using such technology, Deaf and hard of hearing constituents have full access to the presentation and captions, all in one place. The office consistently uses this technology at various events and functions, including Governor Larry Hogan's regional cabinet meeting in Carroll County in May 2017. For more information about the technology, please visit: [odhh.maryland.gov/resource-guide-wireless-streamlined-real-time-captioning/](http://odhh.maryland.gov/resource-guide-wireless-streamlined-real-time-captioning/).



Real-time captioning streamlined wirelessly onto one screen at Governor Larry Hogan's regional cabinet meeting in Carroll County.

## 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 Human Services** The office provided feedback and recommendations on existing policies and best practices related to youth placement, data collection and reporting mechanisms, and accessible case management services involving Deaf and hard of hearing youth in Maryland.

**Maryland State Department of Education** In FY16, the office served on a work group to review teaching certification requirements for new educators who seek to work within the Deaf Education system. Amendments were proposed to change “hearing-impaired” to “Deaf and hard of hearing,” remove the special education certificate requirement, and identify content-specific coursework for new applicants seeking to teach in the Deaf and hard of hearing community. The amendments were approved by the both the State Board and the Professional Standards in Teacher Education Board (PSTEB) in FY18, and are now in effect.

**Behavioral Health Administration** The office actively releases information related to the opioid and heroin crisis, such as releasing captioned public service announcements on issues such as the Good Samaritan Law, use of naloxone to help reverse an overdose, and stigma surrounding addiction. For more information about the office’s work on behavioral health, please see page 17.

### Governor Larry Hogan Delivers 2017 State of the State Address

On February 1, 2017, Governor Larry Hogan delivered his annual State of the State address to both houses of the General Assembly at the Maryland House of Delegates chamber in Annapolis.

To read the 2017 State of the State address, please visit:  
[governor.maryland.gov/2017/02/01/2017-state-of-the-state-address](http://governor.maryland.gov/2017/02/01/2017-state-of-the-state-address).

To watch the address, please visit: [youtu.be/FbepwVI5yiE](https://youtu.be/FbepwVI5yiE). The captioned video is interpreted by a Certified Deaf Interpreter team. To read more about the office’s interpreting policies related to live broadcasts, please see page 14.



## Legislative Awareness Day 2017

Historically, the Office has hosted its annual Legislative Awareness Day in February during the 90-day legislative session in Maryland. This year, the Office decided to re-structure the annual event and host Legislative Awareness Day in the Fall instead. Time and again, Legislative Awareness Day would often be postponed due to inclement weather and snow. Additionally, hosting the event in the Fall gives the community additional time to meet with their legislators and formulate plans for legislative proposals. During the legislative session from January to April, it is often too late to introduce a bill since the session is already underway.

The Office announced that the 2017 annual Legislative Awareness Day event would be held on Monday, October 9, 2017.

“ We have already accomplished a great deal. But together, we can – and we must – do more.”

- Governor Larry Hogan



Governor Larry Hogan delivers his 2017 State of the State address. The address was interpreted by a Certified Deaf Interpreter team.

## Director Keynotes & Appearances

- Maryland Department of Disabilities' 26<sup>th</sup> ADA Anniversary
- Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association (TEDPA) National Conference
- Regional Cabinet Meeting: Washington County
- Deaf Anti-Violence Coalition National Conference
- Potomac Chapter of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf conference
- Maryland State Steering Committee for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students 2017 conference
- Behavioral Health Administration's Annual Plan Development Stakeholders conference
- Maryland Early Hearing Detection and Intervention 2017 conference
- Regional Cabinet Meeting: Carroll County
- Maryland Digital Government Summit
- Hearing Loss Association of America National Convention
- National Association of State Agencies of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing annual meeting



Left: Director Brick shares a few remarks at the Maryland Department of Disabilities' 26<sup>th</sup> ADA Anniversary in an event with Lt. Governor Boyd Rutherford.



Right: Office staff with Haben Girma, the keynote speaker for the Maryland Department of Disabilities' 26<sup>th</sup> ADA anniversary and the first DeafBlind graduate of Harvard Law School.





## Communications

When the office posts 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 website, [odhh.maryland.gov](http://odhh.maryland.gov), has a live newsfeed featuring social media posts.

With the office maximizing the use of Facebook and Twitter, the number of Facebook and Twitter followers increased in FY17 by 17% and 19% compared to FY16, respectively.

### Top Five Facebook Posts of FY17

- **Governor Larry Hogan Honors Nyle DiMarco and Signs “I support deaf people”** ([bit.do/nyle](http://bit.do/nyle)) – Reached **46,154** people. To read more about the event, please see the [FY16 annual report](#) (page 14).
- **Mental Health Advocacy for Governor Larry Hogan’s “Day to Serve”** ([bit.do/daytoserve](http://bit.do/daytoserve)) – Reached **12,260** people. To read more about the office’s work on behavioral health services and mental health, please see page 17.
- **Governor Larry Hogan Announces New Tablet Program Through Maryland Relay** ([bit.do/tabletprogram](http://bit.do/tabletprogram)) – Reached **6,576** people. To read more about Maryland Relay’s tablet program, please see page 16.
- **Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Motion to Prevent Language Deprivation** ([bit.do/EHDIemotion](http://bit.do/EHDIemotion)) – Reached **6,297** people. To read more about the motion, please see page 15.
- **Maryland Medicaid Becomes First State to Reimburse Providers When Engaged in Telehealth via Videophones** ([bit.do/telehealth](http://bit.do/telehealth)) – Reached **22,227** people. To read more about the event, please see page 17.

### Social Media Channels



[facebook.com/MDGODHH](http://facebook.com/MDGODHH)



[bit.ly/2yxCEdx](http://bit.ly/2yxCEdx)



[twitter.com/mdodhh](http://twitter.com/mdodhh)

To join the office’s e-mail distribution list: [bit.ly/2fD2mpu](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 FY17, Stephanie Summers was the Chair of the advisory council, along with Erin Buck-Skees as the Vice Chair and Charm Smith as Secretary.

**Stephanie Summers** *Chair*

**Erin Buck-Skees** *Vice Chair*

**Charm Smith** *Secretary*

### **Citizen Representatives**

Jason Corning  
Dr. Lisalee Egbert  
Larry Gray  
Dr. Eddy F. Laird  
Vikki Porter  
Charm L. Smith  
Stephanie R. Summers (Parent)

### **Maryland State Department of Education**

Marion Marny Helfrich

### **Department of Health**

Tanya D. Green

### **Department of Human Services**

Gregory S. James

### **Maryland Department of Transportation**

Janet Moye 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

### **Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development**

Gordon Outlaw

(Members identified are as of June 30, 2017)

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

To contact the Chair, please e-mail: [macdhhchair@gmail.com](mailto: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. In FY17, the office either hosted or co-hosted six town hall meetings.

After each advisory council meeting, the office always hosts town hall meetings to promote more engagement among council members and constituents. The 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 FY17, town hall meetings were held on:

- **September 22, 2016**
- **October 13, 2016**
- **December 15, 2016**
- **March 16, 2017**
- **March 25, 2017**
- **June 8, 2017**

In FY18, town hall meetings are scheduled for:

- **August 15, 2017**
- **August 23, 2017**
- **September 13, 2017**
- **September 22, 2017**
- **December 8, 2017**
- **March 23, 2017**
- **May 3, 2018**

To view locations of the upcoming advisory council meetings, please visit: [odhh.maryland.gov/meetings/](http://odhh.maryland.gov/meetings/).

The office also hosts other town hall meetings, which are announced via our communications channels and posted on our calendar: [odhh.maryland.gov/events-calendar/](http://odhh.maryland.gov/events-calendar/)



## Staff Biographies

**Kelby Brick** *Director* – Brick led efforts in 2001 to establish the Maryland Governor’s Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. 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. 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 has been 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.

**Allysa Dittmar** *Communications and Policy Manager* – Dittmar recently earned her master’s degree at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, where she was a clinical research intern at the Kennedy Krieger Institute (Johns Hopkins Medicine) and graduated with highest honors. Dittmar’s research and advocacy work focuses 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.

**Deborah Nathanson** *Policy Manager* -- For more than 20 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. She earned a master’s degree from University of Texas-Austin and a bachelor’s degree from Gallaudet University.



CHANGING  
**Maryland**  
*for the Better*

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Governor's Office of the  
Deaf & Hard of Hearing

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