

**Maryland Association of the Deaf
Board Meeting
Monday, January 27, 2025
Zoom**

Present: Tina Joyner (President), Jacob Leffler (Vice President), Tiasha Bera (Secretary, Vikki Porter (Board Member at Large), Thelma Schroeder (Senior Citizens), Blaise Delahoussaye (Board Member at Large representing Deaf Blind)

Absent: Allysa Dittmar (Treasurer)

President Tina Joyner called the meeting to order at 6:06 P.M.

President's Report

President Joyner reported that there is an interpreter licensure law amendment and President Joyner had to make a vlog on MDAD's strong position on the current law.

Vice President's Report

Vice President Jacob Leffler reported that he met with Board Members and Committee members to discuss further projects. He encouraged the Committee to continue their work.

Secretary's Report

No Report.

Treasurer's Report

No Report.

Board Members' Report

Board Member at Large Vikki Porter reported that the workgroup on the Commission for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing that was passed in 2024, finally established last October. The report is due on June 1, 2025. The purpose of the workgroup is to study what the community needs and gap services, and data.

Appointed Board Member (Senior Citizens) Thelma Schroeder's report

Town Hall Overview

The town hall took place on November 21st at the Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center. It was coordinated by the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GODHH), Maryland Deaf Senior Citizens (MDSC), and MDAD. Several staff members from the Maryland

Department of Aging (MDOA), including MDOA Secretary Carmel Roques, along with representatives from other county agencies, were also invited.

Thirteen individuals shared their experiences and concerns. The common themes identified were as follows:

1. Communication Barriers

- Concerns: Inconsistent interpreter services, poor video remote interpreting, lack of communication between drivers and DeafBlind riders, and communication gaps in nursing homes.
- Theme: Effective communication remains a significant challenge, particularly for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard-of-Hearing individuals.

2. Lack of Resources & Support

- Concerns: Limited resources for Deaf individuals, a lack of awareness about available state services, and high rental fees at senior centers.
- Theme: There is a pressing shortage of resources and support systems, especially in healthcare and senior care.

3. Negative Experiences with Care Facilities

- Concerns: Poor experiences in nursing homes, crowded room assignments, and loneliness in memory care due to the lack of Deaf residents.
- Theme: Many face inadequate living conditions and social isolation, particularly in facilities that fail to meet the needs of Deaf or DeafBlind individuals.

4. Ineffectiveness of Advocacy & Oversight

- Concerns: Ineffective Ombudsman services, with little or no results.
- Theme: Advocacy and oversight services are not effectively addressing the unique challenges faced by Deaf and DeafBlind individuals.

5. Health & Well-Being Issues

- Concerns: Negative rehabilitation experiences and ongoing pain.
- Theme: Access to appropriate rehabilitation and healthcare remains a significant concern for older Deaf and DeafBlind individuals.

Follow-Up Actions:

- A follow-up meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 29th, with GODHH Director Usherla DeBerry.
- Another meeting will be arranged with Mark J. Scott, Customer Relations Specialist with the Office of Health Care Quality, to further address these concerns.

Longevity Ready Maryland (LRM)

- I participated in a Google meeting on January 7th to learn more about the adapted LRM Objectives and Strategies and the Data Dashboard.

- Vice President Jacob also attended a similar session on January 9th.
- MDAD plans to share information about LRM with the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community and collect feedback in March.

NAD's Taskforce on Aging (Deaf Seniors Issues)

- Aging issues for the Deaf community were identified as one of the five priorities at the recent National Association of the Deaf (NAD) conference.
- NAD will collaborate closely with Deaf Seniors of America (DSA) to address these concerns.
- I have volunteered to serve on this task force to help represent the needs of the community.

Senior Housing Initiative for the Deaf Community in Frederick

- An event is scheduled for February 18th at the Urbana Regional Library in Frederick.
- I am invited to attend.

Committee Report:

Finance Committee:

Treasurer Allysa Dittmar sent a report in writing that she would like to see if MDAD can change the software to monitor the budget. She is looking more into quickbook which she believes is much easier to utilize.

Legislative Committee

President Joyner and Vice President Leffler reported that the legislative session began on January 8, 2025. The committee is tracking several bills such as Senior Citizens Check in Call, Social Work Licensure, Open Captioned Movies (making an amendment to reduce the amount of screens), a workgroup to study isolation and loneliness, and other things.

Hospital Committee

(Report)

Mental Health

President Joyner and Vice President Leffler had several meetings with the Committee. It was decided that we are not moving forward with the legislation at this time. We are continuing to look for some solutions.

Scholarship Committee

Blaise and Thelma, Chair and Assistant Chair reviewed the original scholarship proposal prepared by Vikki and Tiasha, which included support for both post-secondary education and youth leadership camps. In alignment with MDAD's mission of advocacy and leadership, we recommended narrowing the focus to youth leadership opportunities.

After consulting with Vice President Jacob in October and receiving his full support, we revised the proposal accordingly. We extend our sincere thanks to Vikki and Tiasha for their excellent initial work.

The updated document has been shared with the Board for review. Please provide any feedback prior to the next Board meeting, when a vote will be taken to move forward with fundraising efforts.

Fundraising Update & Ideas

- Current fund balance (as of November 2024): \$1,000
- Proposed fundraising ideas:
 - 50/50 raffles at community events
 - Online donation platform
 - Silent auction during the symposium
 - "Dine and Donate" events with local restaurants
 - Trivia night (virtual or in-person)
 - Branded merchandise sales
 - Charity dinner or potluck
 - Wine & cheese event with a brief scholarship presentation

We welcome your input on the revised proposal and these fundraising ideas. Thank you for your support.

Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI)

Dr. Tommy Horejes who is representing MDAD on this Advisory Council. He was recently elected as the Chair of the Council along with Dr. Danielle Previ as the vice chair. It is the first time that Deaf people are elected in both positions at the same time. (Report)

Deaf Culture Digital Library Committee

No Report.

Biennial State Conference Committee

Chair Meredith DeSomma is seeking a venue for the conference.

New Business:

Jacob Leffler moved that MDAD sends Dr. Tommy Horejes to Pittsburgh to attend the EHDI Conference and can spend up to \$1,300.

Seconded by Vikki Porter

CARRIED

Thelma Schroeder moved that MDAD donates \$500 for the National Association of the Deaf's Region 1 State Association Day to cover interpreters expenses.

Seconded by Meredith DeSomma

CARRIED

Jacob Leffler moved that MDAD approves the revised Scholarship Criteria.

Seconded by Meredith DeSomma

CARRIED

Announcements

President Joyner announced that the NAD's Region 1 State Association Day is on March 8, 2025 and encouraged everyone to attend and it is free and on zoom. NAD just announced that the National Leadership Training Conference is on October 29, 2025 in Austin, Texas.

President Tina Joyner adjourned the meeting at 7:56 P.M

Respectfully Submitted by

Tiasha Bera

Secretary