

2010 Legislative Wrap-Up

Legislative Session is over and there were an unprecedented number of bills considered that directly impact Marylanders with hearing loss. Because of the leadership and vision of the O'Malley/Brown Administration, this was an incredibly exciting and successful Session for ODHH and for the communities we serve. From ODHH's first-ever Legislative Awareness Day to the successful passage of two departmental bills, Governor O'Malley and Lt. Governor Brown have sustained their commitment to equal access for all Marylanders.

We would like to thank everyone who got involved in the legislative process this year. Whether you sent an email, came to Legislative Awareness Day, or testified on a bill, you contributed to improving the quality of life for Maryland's deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind residents.

SB 79 - ODHH Responsibilities

Link: <http://mlis.state.md.us/2010rs/billfile/sb0079.htm>

This legislation amends the definition of "deaf and hard of hearing individuals" within our statute to include individuals who are deafblind. The bill would also change the name of the Advisory Council **for** the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to the Advisory Council **on** the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and increase the roster for the Council from 16 to 18 members, adding a member with knowledge about deafblind individuals and a representative from the Department of Aging (State Agency).

Outcome: This bill passed both the House and the Senate and will be signed by the Governor next month.

SB 68/HB1501 - State Government - Human Relations - Closed-Captioning Activation Required

Link: <http://mlis.state.md.us/2010rs/billfile/sb0068.htm>

SB 68 was proposed by ODHH. Initially, this legislation required that TVs located in a place open to the public have closed captioning activated at all times when it is open and the TV is on. While in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, it was amended to require that captions be activated upon request.

Delegate Craig Rice cross-filed SB 68 in the House - HB 1501 - State Government - Human Relations - Closed-Captioning Activation Required. HB 1501 was submitted WITHOUT the Senate's amendments. Despite the advocacy efforts of ODHH and many constituents and stakeholders, the members of the committee agreed with the Senate and amended the bill to require that captions be activated upon request.

Even with the amendment, this legislation is a step to ensure access for people with hearing loss in Maryland. For the first time in Maryland, if a place of public accommodation does not activate the captions on a television upon request, they have broken the law. This means that the deaf or hard of hearing person can file a complaint with the Maryland Commission on Human Relations and the business may receive a fine of \$500.

Outcome: This bill passed both the House and the Senate and will be signed by the Governor next month. Once Governor O'Malley signs the bill, it will go into effect on October 1, 2010. For more information about his bill visit: http://www.odhh.maryland.gov/2010_updates.html.

SB 102/HB 1086 - Election Law - Campaign Advertisements - Closed Captioning

Link: <http://mlis.state.md.us/2010rs/billfile/sb0102.htm> and <http://mlis.state.md.us/2010rs/billfile/hb1086.htm>

This legislation would require captioning on campaign advertisements distributed via broadcast TV, cable TV, and on the Internet. It was introduced in the Senate in January and was later cross-filed in the House as HB 1086.

The House considered an amended version of HB 1086. As amended, this law would only apply to candidates running for statewide office - Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, and Comptroller. While these amendments significantly reduce the number of candidates who must caption their advertisements, the bill would have made sure that the campaign messages of candidates running for a statewide office are accessible.

Outcome: This bill did not pass. The House passed HB 1086 with amendments, but both HB 1086 and SB 102 were stalled in the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs committee and never received a vote.

HB 1463 - Rachel's Law - Closed Captioning in Movie Theaters

Link: <http://mlis.state.md.us/2010rs/bills/hb/hb1463f.pdf>

This legislation would require movie theatres to provide access to closed-captioning technology for deaf and hard of hearing individuals and set the minimum number of showings for which closed-captioning technology is required at a movie theater.

Outcome: This bill did not pass. This bill received an unfavorable report from the committee. This means that the bill did not receive further consideration this session. Delegate Kelly, the sponsor of the bill, has indicated that he may introduce it again next year and we look forward to your advocacy and support.

HB 59/SB 467 - Task Force to Explore the Incorporation of the Principles of Universal Design for Learning into the Education Systems in Maryland

Link: <http://mlis.state.md.us/2010rs/billfile/hb0059.htm> and <http://mlis.state.md.us/2010rs/billfile/sb0467.htm>

This legislation establishes the Task Force to Explore the Incorporation of Principles of Universal Design for Learning into the Education Systems in Maryland and provides for the membership, purposes, and staffing of the Task Force. Initially, a representative knowledgeable about the education of children with hearing loss was not included. ODHH successfully advocated for an amendment adding a member knowledgeable about educating children with hearing loss.

Outcome: This bill passed both the House and the Senate and will be signed by the Governor next month. For more information about UDL, visit <http://www.udl4maryland.org/>.