



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

JANESE LEWIS GEORGE

Ward 4 Councilmember
Chair of the Committee on
Facilities and Family Services

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Committee on Executive Administration and Labor
Committee on Public Works and Operations

January 23, 2023

Kari Cooke
Director
Mayor's Office of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing
2000 14th St. NW, Suite 101
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Director Cooke:

The Committee on Facilities and Family Services has scheduled a Performance Oversight Hearing for the Mayor's Office of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing on Thursday, February 16th, 2023 at 2:00 PM. The hearing will be held virtually.

To ensure a productive oversight hearing, it is the Committee's preference that you join the Zoom conference in time to listen to any public testimony provided with respect to your agency prior to providing your own testimony. In addition, the Committee requests that you submit your written testimony to the Committee at least 48 hours prior to the commencement of the hearing.

In preparation for this hearing, the Committee is sending the following questions for your response. Please submit your responses no later than **5 p.m. on February 10, 2022**. *For ease of review, please ensure that the responses include searchable text.* Please send your responses to facilities@dccouncil.us. If the documents are too large to send by e-mail, please return via Dropbox here: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/t628kskc78urpre0fpv52/h?dl=0&rlkey=yd76922fho5thrpqzehox3p04>. Please provide an electronic version with text responses in a single document, with clearly marked attachments where necessary. Please do not submit any sensitive, non-public, or personally identifiable information.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Committee on Facilities and Family Services at facilities@dccouncil.gov. Thank you in advance for your timely response.

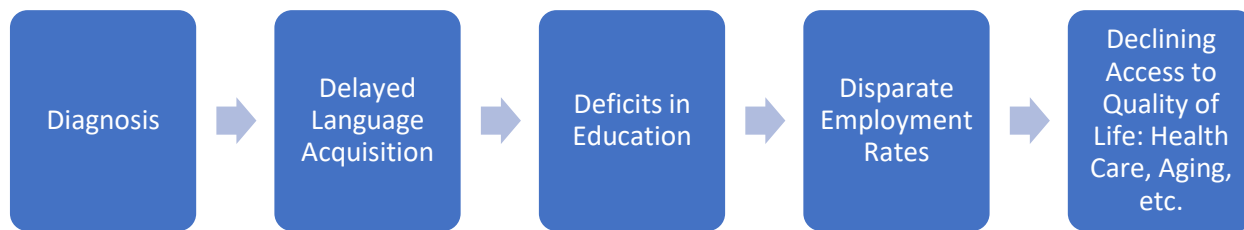
Sincerely,

Janeese Lewis George
Ward 4 Councilmember
Chair, Committee on Facilities & Family Services

Agency Objectives

- 1) Identify the agency's overall mission statement.
 - a) The mission of the Mayor's Office of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing (MODDHH) is to engage with the Deaf, DeafBlind, Deaf Disabled, Late Deafened, & Hard of Hearing (D/DB/DD/HH/LD) community and connect residents to the Executive Office of Mayor Bowser, District agencies, programs and initiatives throughout the government. The MODDHH tracks local D/DB/DD/HH/LD issues, concerns and proposals and annually presents these ideas to the Executive Office of the Mayor and stakeholders. Home to the largest ASL using workforce in the United States, the District of Columbia will become a leader in Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing civil rights in the nation.
- 2) Identify the Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the Office of Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing. Explain why each KPI was selected and how it supports both the overall mission of the agency and the success of this division.
 - a) MODDHH will work with the Office of Budget and Performance Management to finalize the agency's key performance indicators. These factors will assess the agency's community engagement, training / technical assistance and policy recommendations annually. At minimum, it will include the following Identify the Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the Office of Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing. Explain why each KPI was selected and how it supports both the overall mission of the agency and the success of this division.
 - i) KPI #1 – Conduct training and educational sessions for government agencies to improve service delivery to deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing Washingtonians.
 - ii) KPI#2 – Conduct targeted outreach at community events, festivals, stakeholder groups and other locations to increase awareness of deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing Washingtonians to District programs.
 - iii) KPI#3 – Conduct review of District policy and procedures and to make recommendations of enhancements and/changes to improve access to deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing Washingtonians.
 - iv) KPI#4 – Conduct ongoing assessment and review of ASL and other services targeted to deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing residents to establish standards and improve communication.
 - b) Please include the outcomes for FY22 and FY23 to date for each KPI measure.
 - i) During FY22, MODDHH focused on internal operations, including hiring staff, developing organizational policy and establishing operations.
- 3) Please provide an update on the Office's achievements in FY 22 and FY 23 to date.
 - a) Ward-to-Ward Townhalls as a listening tour
 - b) Community Meetings with local organizational leaders
 - c) Intergovernmental engagements: Department of Disability Services in their Latino Conference on Disability, District of Columbia Public Library Accessibility Center on Deaf outreach, Office of Disability Rights in their 15th Annual Disability and Diversity Expo, DISB partnership with SYEP Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing youth engagement

- d) Hosted first ever Global Technology Accessibility Summit, setting up DC as the world leader in accessible technology. The recognition led to invitation to be keynote speaker at the prestigious TDI-Telecommunications for the Deaf Information Conference in Summer 2023
 - e) Successful community programming: Partnering with multiple community-based organizations, and such as DC Association of the Deaf, DC Area Black Deaf Advocates, and more
 - f) Open House: Hosted a four hour open house for community members to learn more about the work of MODDHH and share partnership opportunities for constituents to be involved
- 4) Identify the agency’s strategic objectives for FY22 and FY23 to date. Share a progress update on each.
- a) The strategic objectives for MODDHH include addressing the Deaf, DeafBlind, Deaf Disabled, and Hard of Hearing community deficiency pipeline:



- i) Diagnosis: Partnering with the DC Health and Human Services Cluster; Joining the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Stakeholder Forum; Exposing families to D/DB/DD/HH/LD Washingtonians who are thriving.
- ii) Language Acquisition: Partnering with community-based organizations to provide community access to ASL learning; Meeting with DeafBlind constituents to learn more about ProTactile ASL learning and development; Partnerships to educate decision-makers on benefits of bilingual education on language acquisition.
- iii) Education: Connecting target students to programs to improve educational outcomes.
- iv) Employment: Summit on Hard of Hearing, Deaf Blind, and Deaf access to middle class employment opportunities; Link community members to job training programs at University of District of Columbia and JobCorp; Publicized small business opportunities in an accessible manner.
- v) Governmental Services/Resources Access: Developing training for governmental agencies to be accessible in their methodology and in their development of new programs and resources.

- 5) What are the most significant barriers that exist for deaf, deaf/blind, and heard of hearing individuals to access city services?
 - a) The most significant barrier is lack of access to on-demand communication accessibility. We will continue working with our DC agency partners and members D/DB/HH community members to develop strategies to breakdown those barriers.
 - b) Cultural competency awareness, for example the unique experiences of people who are Deaf/DeafBlind/Hard of Hearing and returning citizens.

Codified Duties of the Office

- 6) The MODDHH was established by A23-418, the “[Office on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Establishment Amendment Act of 2019](#)” to advance the civil rights of the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities by ensuring and overseeing District-wide compliance with laws that affect the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities. The law includes 13 required duties of the office. Please share an update and relevant data on each for FY22 and FY23 to date:
 - a) Advocate for the adoption of laws, policies, and programs that benefit the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities;
 - i) Accessibility Toolkit and future accessibility trainings – MODDHH seeks to develop an accessibility toolkit to serve as guidelines for DC government organizations and agencies to equip their programs, resources, and services to fully accessible to D/DB/DD/HH/LD residents of DC. While American Sign Language (ASL) is the primary language of a large population of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community, not everyone in the community communicates in sign language. There are Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened individuals who rely on Closed Captioning, CART, and plain language materials. There are unique and varying communication needs of the D/DB/DD/HH/LD community including ASL interpreters, Certified Deaf interpreters, Pro-tactile ASL, Close Vision interpreting, Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), and Closed Captioning. The Toolkit also serves as guide DC government to gain cultural competency on D/DB/DD/HH/LD community.
 - ii) Submitted comments to Federal Communications Commission in response to proposed rulemaking on rates for interstate inmate calling services. MODDHH asked that the FCC remove the application of the rule to only carceral systems with more than 50 people. The population requirement enforces the TRS communication access mandate to be arbitrarily applied creating inequity of services and rights provided to D/DB/DD/HH/LD incarcerated individuals. All D/DB/DD/HH/LD individuals incarcerated have the right to communication access regardless of the size of the facility. MODDHH also asked that FCC reconsider the rule regarding point-to-point VP calls and Captioned Telephone calls which currently allows prison phone companies to charge D/DB/DD/HH/LD individuals for these calls, which is a practice that is prohibited by federal law. MODDHH will continue to work closely with community-based organizations to advocate for the needs of D/DB/DD/HH/LD residents of DC who are incarcerated and returning citizens.

- iii) MODDHH created Automated Closed Captioning Procedure one-pagers to educate ANC meeting stakeholders on how to equip themselves for accessible meetings to D/DB/DD/HH/LD folks who rely on closed captioning for communication.
- iv) Establishing Policy and Accessibility Workgroups to establish co-development with DC constituents. Constituents will give feedback on program design, program delivery, measurement and/or scaling. We are currently in progress of recruiting members of the community across various policy and accessibility expertise areas.
- v) MODDHH worked closely with audiologists and doctors from Georgetown and Children's National, DC Department of Health, American Cochlear Implant Alliance-DC, & National CMV Foundation to discuss implications and pathways to enhancing screening and diagnosis of hearing loss.
- b) Provide community outreach, training, and education on issues affecting the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities;
 - i) Meetings with internal government partners like the Mayor's Office of Community Relations and Services, the Mayor's Office of Returning Citizens, as well as external partners like Children's National Hospital and Deaf REACH (a Deaf Disabled nonprofit organization)
- c) Provide information about existing programs and services for the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities;
 - i) Same as above
- d) Refer members of the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities with problems or concerns to the appropriate District agency or organization;
 - i) Partnering with MOCRS, DDS, and ODR to support referrals to appropriate District agencies
- e) Assist educational institutions, employment agencies, social service agencies, and businesses comply with District and federal laws that affect the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities;
 - i) MODDHH has served as a consultant and resource for institutions aiming to increase communications accessibility in their work in compliance with District and federal laws
- f) Provide members of the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities with access to specialized services, including case management, interpreter services, technology services, such as assistive listening devices, independent living services, and information services;
 - i) Worked with DDS to refer constituents to case management, technology services, and independent living services; as well as worked with ODR to provide access to interpreting services prior to the transfer of the ECP project on February 13, 2023
- g) Maintain a registry of available qualified interpreters in the District and work to increase the number of qualified interpreters in the District;
 - i) MODDHH has developed a list serve of 10 interpreters who already meet the minimum standards. In addition to the qualified interpreters who have already worked with our office, MODDHH is currently developing an interpreter standardization and screening for interpreters who wish to work in DC Government. With the implementation of interpreter standardization, the goal is to make DC the premier city for interpreters to live and work.

The implementation of interpreter standardization will equip DC to track all interpreters (regardless of certification) that are qualified to provide services.

- h) Create and distribute visitor communication cards to the Metropolitan Police Department containing instructions on how to effectively communicate with a deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing motorist, along with images of common traffic situations;
 - i) Currently working with MPD Deaf and Hard of Hearing Unit and community advocates to determine culturally-informed and competent ways to develop communications access with Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing constituents; based on on-going conversations with residents and other experts we are looking for additional ways to meet this goal.
- i) Assist agencies in developing policies and practices that consider the needs of the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities;
 - i) Creating the Accessibility Toolkit that will serve as a resource for government agencies to adopt communications accessibility
- j) Ensure District-wide compliance with laws and policies that protect the civil rights of the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities;
 - i) The MODDHH Policy Analyst is conducting an assessment of District-wide compliance to telecommunications laws and policies, will add additional communications accessibility assessments after meeting with DC Office of Human Rights
- k) Assist agencies and the Council with referrals to qualified interpreters;
 - i) The DC Effective Communications Program (that oversees sign language and CART) has been transferred from ODR to MODDHH, this enables MODDHH to take the lead in overseeing ASL and CART accessibility to the Executive Office of the Mayor.
- l) Coordinate with the appropriate agencies to provide:
 - i) All members of the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities who are children with support and access, from birth to all services necessary to ensure language access and developmental support; and
 - (1) MODDHH has met with the DOH's Early Hearing Detection and Intervention program to become stakeholders in this work.
 - ii) The deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities with support and access to workforce development opportunities;
 - (1) MODDHH has participated in several Disability Employment Month initiatives, as well as the partnering with local deaf-owned small businesses.
- m) Provide training to agencies and the Council on:
 - i) The needs of the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities as it relates to each agency's and the Council's functions and mission;
 - (1) MODDHH is finalizing a training program for government partners. The session will provide information on cultural awareness, recommendations for engaging DDHH residents, information accessing and requesting ASL interpreters, and use of technology to engage residents.

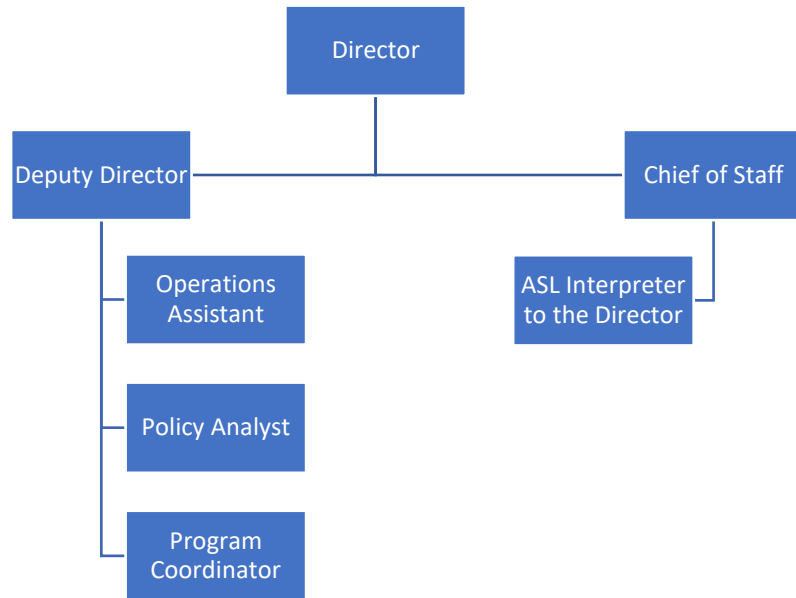
- (2) MODDHH will work with the Office of the Secretary of the Council to schedule assessments of Council offerings and will as requested work with Council Committees and offices.
 - ii) Cultural awareness of the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities; and
 - (1) The deaf and hard of hearing community is diverse and because of that diversity MODDHH knows that competency around Deaf Culture is intrinsic in DC government. We are developing training that will address many of the myths surrounding Deaf Culture as well as give greater attention to American Deaf, DeafBlind and Heard of Hearing Culture and the achievements of this diverse community. It will cover areas such as: 1. Variations in how a person becomes deaf or hard of hearing 2. Cultural Identity/etiquette 3. Contributions of D/DB/HH communities, 4. Social inclusion 5. Accommodations procedures
 - iii) Basic sign language communication.
 - (1) We are currently working with community partners to provide basic sign language classes inside DC government as well as families of DDHH individuals, community-based organizations, local businesses and anyone that encounters/interacts with the DDHH community or has an expressed interest in learning Sign language.
- 7) The office is also tasked with three annual reporting requirements. Please share an update and relevant data on each for FY22 and FY23 to date:
- a) An analysis of the accessibility of District programs for the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities;
 - i) MODDHH is currently conducting a comprehensive analysis of District services and programs, including meeting with agency directors and other leaders.
 - ii) District agencies and government offices should aim to provide translated materials, websites, and press releases to constituents in ASL.
 - iii) TTY Project – MODDHH has created a spreadsheet of all District agencies and organizations listing their TTY numbers. There are offices that list an individualized phone number, offices that list 711 (relay phone service line), and offices that do not list a TTY number at all on their website.
 - b) An evaluation of the availability of American Sign Language interpretation, real-time captioning, assistive listening systems, and other language access measures for the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities, at agencies and the Council; and
 - i) The DC Effective Communications Program (including interpreters, CART, etc.) has been transferred from ODR to MODDHH this week.

Additionally, MODDHH is currently developing standardization methods and screenings for all interpreters who serve DC government agencies

- c) Recommendations for new laws, policies, or programs that address the needs of the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities.
 - i) MODDHH is currently reviewing laws, policies, and programs to provide future recommendations.

Agency Structure and Staff

- 8) Please provide an organizational chart for the agency.



- 9) Please share a copy of the agency’s Schedule A.



- 10) Please share the agency’s FY22 budget and FY23 budget.



- 11) Does your agency have any discretionary fund or cash set aside for emergency cash to families, or individuals in distress, and what is the process for deploying that emergency fund?
 - a) No.

Community Engagement

12) Outline how the MODDHH engages with the community including youth, unhoused, immigrants, veterans, and seniors.

- Represented the Mayor at DC Area Black Deaf Advocates' Black Deaf Youth Summit, teaching Black Deaf Washingtonians in high school about the importance of DC's impact in Black Deaf History
- Collaborated with World Federation for the Deaf to discuss partnerships between our offices
- Visited Gallaudet University's Center for Black Deaf Studies to learn more about their work and discuss future collaboration efforts
- Attended the Mayor's 15th Annual Disability Awareness Expo and engaged with DDBDDHHL D constituents at the event
- Sponsored accessibility for the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs' annual High Heel Race – ASL and CDI interpreters
- Attended November 5th Open Streets event and engaged with DDBDDHHL D constituents at the event.
- Collaborated with Gallaudet University's Indigenous People Student Alliance (IPSA) to host a virtual ASL Indigenous Storytelling event
- Attended Mayor's Annual Senior Citizen Holiday Dinner where the office engaged with DDBDDHHL D senior citizens and supported them as they expressed their accessibility concerns (connected them to the director of DACL)
- Recorded ASL holiday signs of various holidays throughout the year
- Submitted comments in response to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proposed rulemaking on rates for interstate inmate calling services, Telecommunication Relay Services (TRS) access for incarcerated people with disabilities.
- Attended the Mayor's Fresh Start 5K and engaged with DDBDDHHL D constituents at the event. Ensured accessibility for DDBDDHHL D constituents by providing ASL and CDI interpreters.
- Attended the Mayor's MLK Peace Walk with DC Area Black Deaf Advocates and DDBDDHHL D constituents. Ensured accessibility by providing ASL and CDI interpreters.
- Visited Deaf Reach and engaged with their customers.
- Attended the Ward 7 Hiring Fair and ensured accessibility by providing ASL and CDI interpreters.
- Hosted an Open House Meet & Greet for DDBDDHHL D constituents and governmental agencies to learn about our office and meet our staff.
- Attended the Greater Washington Asian Deaf Association and Gallaudet University's Asian Pacific Islander Association's Lunar New Year gala (which also served as APIA's 40th anniversary).

13) Outline how the MODDHH works with other District government agencies to promote accessible materials and engagement for all residents.

- Provided ASL translation of the DC World Pride 2025 announcement

- Educated DDBDDHHL D on the voter registration process by translating information in ASL via DC Board of Elections and collaboration with a DDBDDHHL D constituent
- Attended the Mayor’s Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs’ Diwali event and engaged with the DDBDDHHL D constituents who attended the event
- Provided ASL translation of the DC Comeback Plan presented by Mayor Muriel Bowser
- Collaborated with the Mayor’s Office of Caribbean Community Affairs to host a Holiday Safety Training event. Ensured accessibility for DDBDDHHL D constituents by providing ASL and CDI interpreters as well as CART
- Joined the Mayor’s Office of Religious Affairs in ensuring access for DDBDDHHL D constituents by providing ASL and CDI interpreters
- Sponsored accessibility (ASL and CDI interpreters) for the Mayor’s Lunar New Year Parade event with the Mayor’s Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs
- Taught MOAPIA Director Guzman how to sign “Happy Lunar New Year” in ASL
- Established monthly meetings with ANC members who are DDBDDHHL D
- Collaborated with DC Area Black Deaf Advocates and Gallaudet University’s Center for Black Deaf Studies to host Black Deaf Book Festival in honor of Black History Month
- Educated the Mayor’s Office of Community Relations and Services on deaf culture and strategies for engaging with DDBDDHHL D constituents
- Visited the Signing Starbucks store on H Street and connected with the Metropolitan Police’s Deaf and Hard of Hearing Unit and staff from Pathways to Housing DC to ensure the safety of Starbucks partners and customers of this location
- Met with the District Clemency Board and HEARD (Helping Educate to Advance the Rights of the Deaf) to gain knowledge and resources on how to advocate for DDBDDHHL D people who are incarcerated
- Attended the Mayor’s Office on Returning Citizens Affairs and District Clemency Board’s event, “Clemency and Other Remedies”, and ensured accessibility (ASL interpreters) for DDBDDHHL D constituents
- Provided DDBDDHHL D representation at the Mayor’s Budget Engagement Forums and ensured accessibility for DDBDDHHL D constituents (ASL and CDI interpreters as well as CART)
- Publicized the following mayoral events in ASL:
 - November 5th Open Streets event
 - November 17th Resume Raiser event

14) Outline how the MODDHH works with the DC Commission for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing.

When announcing appointment of the first Director of MODDHH, Mayor Bowser also announced formation of the Advisory Committee to the Office of Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of

Hearing. This committee will consist of at least 11 persons from the DDHH community, at least 1 person from each Ward and will strive for diversity in culture, gender identity, and state of hearing loss. The committee will also include representatives of District agencies that provide key services to DDHH residents. Appointments to the Committee will be finalized during FY23.