



May 13, 2026

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

TO: Public Safety, Health and Human Services (PSHHS) Committee

THRU: Nathaniel Tutt III  
Committee Director, PSHHS Committee

FROM: David Noto  
Legislative Budget and Policy Analyst

Policy Analysis and Fiscal Impact Statement  
CR- 024-2026 A RESOLUTION concerning an Accessibility Taskforce for the Blind and Deaf

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**CR- 024 -2026** (proposed by: Council Member Blegay)

Referred to the Public Safety, Health and Human Services Committee (PSHHS)

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A RESOLUTION for the purpose of identifying accessibility barriers and developing recommendations to improve access for blind, low-vision, deafblind, deaf, and hard-of-hearing residents in Prince George's County; consideration of related accessibility issues affecting other residents with disabilities; the membership of the accessibility task force; and generally relating to improving accessibility for residents who are deaf or blind.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**Direct Impact:**

*Expenditures:* No expenditures anticipated.

*Revenues:* No revenue impact likely.

**Indirect Impact:**

Potentially favorable.

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### **Legislative Summary:**

CR-024-2026<sup>1</sup>, proposed by Council Member Blegay and sponsored by Council Members Wala Blegay, Krystal Oriadha, Danielle I. Hunter, Sydney J. Harrison, Jolene Ivey, Wanika Fisher, Thomas E. Dernoga, Eric C. Olson was presented on April 7, 2026 and referred to the Public Safety, Health and Human Services Committee (PSHHS). This resolution would create a workgroup to explore means of improving accessibility for County residents who are blind, low-vision, deafblind, deaf, and hard-of-hearing.

The Workgroup shall be comprised of the following members:

1. The Council member who proposed the workgroup
2. A Prince George's County resident who is blind or low-vision;
3. A Prince George's County resident who is deaf or hard-of-hearing;
4. A representative from the Department of Family Services;
5. A representative from the Office of Information Technology;
6. A representative from the Department of Social Services;
7. A representative from the Department of Public Works and Transportation;
8. A representative from Prince George's County Public Schools;
9. A representative from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority;
10. A representative from Gallaudet University;
11. A representative from Connections Beyond Sight;
12. A representative from Maryland/ DC Hands & Voices; and
13. A representative from the Prince George's County Memorial Library System;

### *Meetings and Reporting*

The Task Force will begin within 90 days of this resolution's adoption and will present its preliminary findings and recommendations to the County Council no later than October 6, 2026, with the Task Force's final recommendations being due by December 8, 2026.

### *Compensation*

No member Task Force is permitted to receive compensation in exchange for any services rendered to the Task Force. Members are entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations<sup>2</sup> as provided by the County Budget.

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### **Current Law/Background:**

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<sup>1</sup> [Prince George's County Council - Reference No. CR-024-2026](#)

<sup>2</sup> [COMAR, Subtitle 02 Business Administration 23.02.01 Standard Travel Regulations](#)

*Federal:*

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a landmark civil rights law which prohibits discrimination based on ability.<sup>3</sup> The ADA is divided into five sections, each relating to different areas of public life. Within these sections are requirements for employers to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities and accessibility requirements on public facilities like retail stores, parks, schools, government buildings, hotels, restaurants and public transit.<sup>4</sup> These requirements are regulated and enforced by the U.S. Department of Justice.

According to the ADA<sup>5</sup>, individuals with vision or hearing disabilities may use different ways to communicate. The ADA requires state and local governments, as well as businesses and nonprofit organizations that serve the public to communicate effectively with people who have vision and hearing disabilities, to ensure that communication is as effective with individuals with vision and hearing disabilities as it is with people without these disabilities.

The Fair Housing Act, a subsection within the Civil Rights Act of 1968<sup>6</sup> also has requirements for protecting disabled individuals from different types of housing discrimination, with the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity within the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development being responsible for administering and enforcing fair housing laws.

*State:*

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is a state-level agency charged with coordinating and improving the delivery of services to individuals with disabilities throughout the state.<sup>7</sup> MDOD evolved out of the Governor's Office for Individuals with Disabilities in 2004<sup>8</sup>, and works closely with other entities like the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights to ensure that state delivers accessible and barrier free services, while developing consistent policies for those living with disabilities.<sup>9</sup> The state also has laws relating to the education of deaf and blind children<sup>10</sup> <sup>11</sup>, specific protections for blind, visually impaired, deaf and hard of hearing individuals<sup>12</sup>, and the regulation of service animals for those who are blind or visually impaired<sup>13</sup>, among others. The Access Maryland Program also provides funding to state-owned facilities, public university campuses, and state parks to make accessibility upgrades for people with disabilities<sup>14</sup>.

*Local:*

Prince George's County agencies continue to strive to improve access for disabled residents. For example, according to the Office of Information Technology, a key performance indicator for their strategic plan is to increase accessibility compliance for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

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<sup>3</sup> [The Americans with Disabilities Act | ADA.gov](https://www.ada.gov/)

<sup>4</sup> [What is the Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)? | ADA National Network](https://www.ada.gov/what-is-the-americans-with-disabilities-act-ada/)

<sup>5</sup> [ADA Requirements: Effective Communication | ADA.gov](https://www.ada.gov/ada-requirements-effective-communication/)

<sup>6</sup> [Civil Rights Division | The Fair Housing Act](https://www.dhs.gov/civil-rights-division/the-fair-housing-act)

<sup>7</sup> [About Us Home](https://www.mdod.org/about-us/home)

<sup>8</sup> [Disabilities, Maryland Department of - Historical Evolution](https://www.mdod.org/disabilities/maryland-department-of-historical-evolution)

<sup>9</sup> [Maryland Commission on Civil Rights](https://www.mdcivilrights.org/)

<sup>10</sup> [Browse - Maryland Code and Court Rules](https://www.mdcivilrights.org/browse-maryland-code-and-court-rules)

<sup>11</sup> [Browse - Maryland Code and Court Rules](https://www.mdcivilrights.org/browse-maryland-code-and-court-rules)

<sup>12</sup> [View Document - Maryland Code and Court Rules](https://www.mdcivilrights.org/view-document-maryland-code-and-court-rules)

<sup>13</sup> [View Document - Maryland Code and Court Rules](https://www.mdcivilrights.org/view-document-maryland-code-and-court-rules)

<sup>14</sup> [Access Maryland Home](https://www.accessmaryland.org/)

Version 2.1, Level AA (the technical standard for state and local governments' web content and mobile apps)<sup>15</sup> to 95%+ and are currently at 85.7%.<sup>16</sup>

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### Resource Personnel:

- Ramon Gonzalez, Legislative Attorney
  - Ayana Crawford, Chief of Staff
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### Discussion/Policy Analysis:

According to the National Deaf Center, about 11 million individuals in the United States are deaf or have serious difficulty hearing.<sup>17</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 1 million individuals in the United States are considered blind.<sup>18</sup>

The American Foundation for the Blind's Project VISITOR (Visually Impaired Seniors' Independent Travel Opportunities and Resources) study showed there's a lack of convenient transportation options for older adults who are unable to drive due to vision difficulties<sup>19</sup>. The other commonly cited challenge for those with vision difficulties is the inaccessibility of digital information, particularly from state and local governments, medical providers and information relating to finding potential jobs<sup>20</sup>.

Those with hearing difficulties face different, but related challenges, with communication barriers, architectural barriers, and technological barriers being the three most frequently cited accessibility barriers.<sup>21</sup> Communication barriers usually stem from a lack of written or visual information, and a gap in understanding between service providers those with hearing difficulties.<sup>22</sup> Architectural barriers are connected to factors like lighting, signage and the acoustic conditions of an environment.<sup>23</sup> Technological barriers primarily involve the limited availability of assistive technologies that could enhance participation in everyday activities. These technologies include, but are not limited to, translation devices or visual alert systems, frequency modulation systems, hearing loops, and speech recognition software. The high costs associated with these technologies frequently hinder their adoption.<sup>24</sup> Finally, social stigma of those with hearing difficulties and cultural differences between the deaf community and those with hearing is also a significant challenge to those with hearing difficulties.<sup>25</sup>

According to the Prince George's County Healthzone, approximately 1.9% of the County's population have a vision difficulty, which is on par with the state, and lower than the national average, while the County's population with a hearing difficulty is lower than both the state and

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<sup>15</sup> [Fact Sheet: New Rule on the Accessibility of Web Content and Mobile Apps Provided by State and Local Governments | ADA.gov](#)

<sup>16</sup> Email with Office of Information Technology, Digital Government Division

<sup>17</sup> [How many deaf people live in the United States? - National Deaf Center Knowledge Base](#)

<sup>18</sup> [VEHSS Modeled Estimates: Vision Loss and Blindness | Vision and Eye Health Surveillance System \(VEHSS\) | CDC](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Fact Sheet: Aging | American Foundation for the Blind](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Fact Sheet: Title II | American Foundation for the Blind](#)

<sup>21</sup> [The Ongoing Challenges of Hearing Loss: Stigma, Socio-Cultural Differences, and Accessibility Barriers - PMC](#)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> [Improving Communication Access for Individuals Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#)

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> [The Stigma of Hearing Loss: A Scoping Review of the Literature Across Age and Gender - PMC](#)

national average.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, approximately 1.9% of the County's population has a hearing difficulty, which is lower than both the state and national average.<sup>27</sup> The majority of residents with either a hearing or a vision difficulty are 75 years old or older.<sup>28</sup>

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**Fiscal Impact:**

- *Direct Impact*

Adoption of CR-024-2026 is not likely to have any direct fiscal impact beyond the entitled reimbursements for expenses for workgroup members under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided by the County Budget.

- *Indirect Impact*

Adoption of CR-024-2026 is not likely to have any indirect fiscal impact.

- *Appropriated in the Current Fiscal Year Budget*

No.

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**Effective Date of Proposed Legislation:**

This Resolution goes into effect on the date of its adoption.

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If you require additional information, or have questions about this fiscal impact statement, please reach me via phone or email.

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<sup>26</sup> [Prince George's County Health Department :: Indicators :: Disparities Dashboard](#)

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Ibid