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The Community College
of Baltimore County

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at The Liberty Center**

3637 Offutt Road
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2/18/20

ATTN: Delegate Lily Qi

Dear Honorable Representatives:

I'm writing in support of HB 0794 to establish a credentialing procedure for Maryland Sign Language Interpreters working in the K-12 education system. As the director of Maryland's longest standing interpreter training program, I wish to extend my thanks to the committee for their hard work in bringing forth such an important and long overdue bill.

For over 35 years, the Community College of Baltimore County has been training sign language interpreters to work as entry level interpreters in low risk settings. However, we know that once students graduate our program, we have no control over where, and with whom they will work. We have heard horror stories from the Deaf community of sign language students working as interpreters and individuals posing as interpreters who do not actually know American Sign Language (ASL). Deaf people require well-trained interpreters to provide them with accessibility, which is their right under the Americans with Disabilities Act. There is no regulation in place in Maryland to protect the Deaf community from such predatory behavior.

As you may know, 92% of deaf children are born to parents who can hear. 3 out of 4 parents do not use sign language with their deaf child. Deaf children are at high risk for language deprivation. Sign language interpreters working in public schools are often are the first language model for deaf children. Earlier I shared with you that Deaf adults shared horror stories about unqualified interpreters. The 92% of deaf children born to hearing parents, the most vulnerable of the Deaf population, are often behind in acquiring language and do not know the difference between a sign language student and a qualified interpreter. There is no regulation in place to protect Deaf children from predatory interpreter behavior unless this legislature passes HB 0794.

I am happy to see a bill like HB 0794 being proposed to protect deaf children in the public school system from unqualified or under qualified interpreters. To my knowledge, Maryland, DC, Florida, New York and Vermont are the only 5 states that do not have any minimum standards for interpreters working with deaf children. Thank you for the work you are doing to protect the rights of Maryland's deaf community.



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More information about language deprivation: <https://www.deaffocus.org/lead-k>
<https://www.nad.org/about-us/position-statements/position-statement-on-early-cognitive-and-language-development-and-education-of-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing-children/>
<https://www.northeastern.edu/cali/annotated-bibliography/language-deprivation-syndrome/>

Faculty member Su Isakson will be in attendance at the February 21st, 2020 hearing. If you have any further questions please feel free to discuss with Ms. Isakson or myself.

Thank you,

Rebecca F. Minor, Ph.D. | INTR Program Coordinator – Associate Professor | The
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