



Written Support

House Ways and Means Committee

House Bill 794: Education – Educational Interpreters – Certification Requirements

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February 21, 2020

On behalf of McDaniel College and the 2,900 undergraduate and graduate students we serve, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of ***HB 794: Education – Educational Interpreters – Certification Requirements***. This bill will require educational interpreters to obtain certification by 2027 in order to work in a Maryland public school. It also specifies qualifications for initial certification, assessment requirements, and professional development plans for certification renewal.

McDaniel College has a long-standing history in Deaf Education. Since its inception in 1967 as a partnership between the College and the Maryland School for the Deaf, McDaniel's Master of Science in Deaf Education has prepared outstanding and award-winning teachers at both the elementary and secondary levels. The Deaf Education program is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation and is approved by the Council on Education of the Deaf and the Maryland State Department of Education.

At the undergraduate level, McDaniel currently offers a minor in American Sign Language (ASL) Studies and is seeking State approval this year to offer an ASL major. These programs provide students with various opportunities for immersion in the language and culture of Deaf people, including an option to spend the January term in an ASL environment or a semester as a visiting student at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C.

McDaniel would welcome the opportunity to support HB 794 with expanded programming to help meet the State's needs for educational interpreters and is very well-positioned to do so. For example, McDaniel could support the implementation of this bill in the following ways:

- Establish articulation agreements with Deaf Studies/ASL/Interpreting associate's degrees at community colleges, creating a seamless pathway for students to transfer to McDaniel and major in ASL.
- Launch a one-year educational interpreting master's degree program. Nationwide, not many master's degrees are available in interpretation, and there may only be one currently offered with a focus on educational settings.

Nationwide, Maryland is one of only five states not to have regulations for interpreters. This seems to be out of line with other aspects of K-12 educator licensure and certification, which are very strongly regulated in Maryland. Interpreters often end up as the primary language model for Deaf students in public school settings. They help ensure that students have a fully accessible educational experience both inside and outside of the classroom. Since Deaf students may have little or no access to any auditory input at school, what they receive visually should be of the highest quality and standard. Therefore, we believe that educational interpreters should have specialized academic and professional credentials and be held to rigorous preparation, testing, and certification standards.

For all of these reasons, McDaniel College supports House Bill 794 and urges a favorable Committee report.