

February 5, 2021

Dear Honorable Representatives:

We are writing in reference to SB0431/HB0535 which will establish a licensure procedure for Maryland Sign Language Interpreters.

We are the directors of the Community College of Baltimore County's Sign Language Interpreter Training Program and the Frederick Community College Interpreter Preparatory Program. Our programs are the only two programs in the state of Maryland that train interpreters to work with the deaf. Deaf people need well-trained interpreters to provide them with accessibility per their rights outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act. Our programs provide students with an AAS in Interpreting, however for our graduates to obtain national certification they also need to complete a baccalaureate degree.

The licensing procedure established by this bill is dependent on interpreters obtaining national certification through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. In order to sit for the test through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, test candidates must hold a minimum of a baccalaureate degree.

The Community College of Baltimore County would still wish to consider offering an applied baccalaureate in the future. FCC is pursuing other ways to further improve our student's skills to also meet the needs of the deaf community, as well as prepare them for the requirements of this bill.

Maryland currently has no regulations which determine who can market themselves an interpreter. Sadly, Maryland deaf citizens often find themselves in situations where the interpreter that was hired for their appointment (doctor appointment, college class, job interview etc...) is not qualified and in some cases has never been trained and/or does not actually know American Sign Language (ASL). Some deaf children, who are mainstreamed in Maryland's K-12 system are being exposed to unqualified language models; stagnating their cognitive development and they have no voice.

This bill is an attempt to set up an aggressive licensing procedure, which will protect deaf children and adults. We support the concept of licensure and support this bill with a few minor changes.

Please support SB0431/HB0535 with the following changes:

- Page 6 line 25 should read "A medical setting, unless the individual is accompanied by a licensed sign language interpreter" If interns can enter an "emergency medical" setting they should also be welcomed in routine medical settings with supervision.
- Page 6 line 28 - add "unless the individual is accompanied by a licensed sign language interpreter" as a way for us to be able to train upcoming educational interpreters.
- Page 6 line 29 - add "unless the individual is accompanied by a licensed sign language interpreter" so that we can train students remotely especially during the pandemic and beyond..

All of our requests will help ensure that we are able to provide appropriate training/mentoring opportunities for interns in our Interpreter Training Programs.

If you have any questions or would like more information please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

**Rebecca F. Minor, Ph.D.** | INTR Program Coordinator – Associate Professor | The Community College of Baltimore County – Interpreter Preparation Program | 443-840-4975 (W) | 443-341-5031 (VP) | 443-840-5134 (fax) | [rminor3@ccbcmd.edu](mailto:rminor3@ccbcmd.edu) -

**Dr. Leslie Puzio** (she/her/hers) . *Ed.D., M.P.A, NIC*  
Assistant Professor & Program Manager . ASL & ASL Interpreter Preparatory Program  
Frederick Community College . [lpuzio@frederick.edu](mailto:lpuzio@frederick.edu) . 301.624.2783 (W)