

House Bill 535 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Delegate Acevero

Madam Chairperson and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee:

My name is Alfred Sonnenstrahl. I am a Deaf individual. I live in Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support **HB535 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021** sponsored by Delegate Acevero.

This bill would require licensure for sign language interpreters working in the state of Maryland and help to ensure that members of the Deaf community have access to qualified interpreters. When unqualified interpreters are allowed to work unchecked, the impact on the communities they serve can be a matter of life or death. This bill provides both a mechanism for licensing interpreters and a means for relief in the form of a grievance process.

Since I am deaf, my eyes are my only source for information and communication. For about ten years, I had been taking glaucoma medicine faithfully. Several years ago, the doctor told me, through a sign language interpreter, I should discontinue the medicine. Six months later, the doctor noticed significant increased pressure that could cause permanent damage in my eyes and told me I should not have discontinued the medicine. After investigation, we learned the interpreter misinterpreted the instructions and was not either certified or licensed. Please pass the bill.

As a constituent, I ask you to please support HB535.

Sincerely,
Alfred Sonnenstrahl
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