



SB 370 Educational Interpreter – Certification Requirements
Senate Education Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

Testimony
Submitted by,
Dr. Leslie Puzio, Program Manager, Frederick Community College

March 3, 2022

Dear Honorable Representatives:

I am writing in reference to SB 0370 Educational Interpreter – Certification Requirements, sponsored by Senator Nancy King, which will establish regulations for the certification of educational interpreters who provide sign language interpreting in the K-12 setting in the state of Maryland. I am the Program Manager for Frederick Community College's ASL Interpreter Preparatory Program. FCC is one of only two programs in the state of Maryland that train interpreters to work with the Deaf.

Deaf children in the K-12 environment need well-trained and qualified interpreters to provide them with accessibility per their rights outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act. Our program provides students with an AAS in ASL Interpreting with the foundational skills necessary for a student to start their Interpreting profession. It is important to note that the program prepares Interpreter students the skills to work in environments not specifically related to K-12 setting.

FCC after seeing the bill submission last year and with the hopes that the bill will be submitted again this year proactively applied for a Perkins Grant that would prepare K-12 Educational Interpreters ready to work under the previously proposed interpreter expectations. FCC was awarded a Perkins Grant for FY 2022-2023 to establish an ASL Educational Interpreter Certificate that will prepare students to take the Educational Interpreter Proficiency Assessment (EIPA) at the end of a 4-semester certificate program. The program will be start being offered in Summer 2023. At the end of the program, students will take the EIPA and aim for a 4.0 or higher. A 4.0 may feel like a high expectation, but it is important to be aware of that a 4.0 or higher is a score that should not be allowed to go below. Interpreters in the public K-12 settings are language models for Deaf children not only learning lessons in class, but these interpreters are teaching sign language.

The licensing procedure has left all organization and requirement criteria to the Maryland State Board of Ed and chose to not include item such as: delegation of Board members, Advocacy Support groups; such as Maryland Association for the Deaf (MDAD), Potomac Chapter of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (PCRID), National Alliance of Black Interpreters (NAOBI), Educational Interpreters, and even Parents of students receiving services, community

collaboration, K-12 interpret collaboration oversight, and criteria for working K-12 ASL interpreters.

Maryland currently has no regulations which determine who can market themselves as 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 barebones licensing procedure, which will protect all Deaf children in the public-school system in the state of Maryland. However, without further concrete collaboration with necessary bodies and organizations in the state of Maryland, We, at FCC, do not support the bill. We are opposed to the bill as written. We hope to see this again in the next legislation session with the following amendments:

- Board make up to include MDAD, PCRID, Educational Interpreter (at level expected), Parent of Deaf child, and others deemed by the Board after board establishment
- EIPA 4.0 or higher
- Prior to submission moving forward, community (Deaf and hearing) members engagement and feedback to the bill language. Lacking community buy-in is paramount to a bill that can affect so many lives without very specific outcomes and expectations.

It is also important to acknowledge that the bill, as written, does not mention the allowance for potential ASL Interpreting students in an accredited program to do internship hours under the oversight of a Certified interpreter.

Lastly, as much as this bill is direly important to our Deaf children who will be our future, we cannot and should not pass a bill that does not have community involvement or support at this time. A model utilized in the State of Minnesota six years ago to establish a bill similar to this one took a lot of ground work, but in the end was very successful to ensure all their K-12 interpreters worked up to getting a 4.0 and in the end – helped our students.

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

Thank you,

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