

Chapter 196

(Senate Bill 645)

AN ACT concerning

State Board of Sign Language Interpreters – Membership and Licensing

FOR the purpose of expanding the membership of and altering the quorum requirements for the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters; authorizing the Governor to remove certain members of the Board under certain circumstances; altering the date by which the Board must establish certain licensing requirements and by which sign language interpreters must meet certain licensing requirements; altering the documents an applicant must submit to the Board; requiring the Board to grant a waiver of certain requirements under certain circumstances; and generally relating to the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters.

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

Article – State Government
Section 9–2401(a) and (o)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – State Government
 Section ~~9–2407~~, 9–2411, 9–2412, 9–2414(a), ~~and~~ 9–2415, ~~9–2419~~, and 9–2420
 Annotated Code of Maryland
 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Chapter 269 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2023
 Section 4 and 5

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Chapter 270 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2023
 Section 4 and 5

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – State Government

9–2401.

- (a) In this subtitle the following words have the meanings indicated.
- (o) “Office” means the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

9-2407.

On or before January 1, 2002, and annually thereafter, the Director shall submit to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of this article, to the members of the General Assembly, a report on:

- (1) the activities of the Office;
- (2) the status of programs and services facilitated by the Office;
- (3) the activities of the Board, including:
 - (i) the number of sign language interpreters licensed by the Board;

[and]

(II) THE NUMBER OF LICENSED SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS IN EACH COUNTY:

1. DETERMINED BY THE LICENSEE'S HOME ADDRESS; OR

2. THE LICENSEE'S COUNTY OR REGION OF PLANNED EMPLOYMENT, IF KNOWN; AND

[(ii)] (III) the number of complaints received by the Board, differentiated by the type of complaint;

(4) statistics on compliance with State and federal laws related to deaf and hard of hearing individuals; and

(5) recommendations for improved delivery of services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

9-2411.

- (a) (1) The Board consists of **[seven] 11** members appointed by the Governor.
- (2) Of the **[seven] 11** members:
 - (i) one shall be a member of the Maryland Association of the Deaf;
 - (ii) one shall be a deafblind individual;

(iii) one shall be a [member of the Potomac Chapter of the Registry of the Interpreters for the Deaf who holds a license under this part] **DEAF INDIVIDUAL;**
[and]

(iv) [four shall be determined by the Board by regulation] **THREE SHALL BE INTERPRETERS FOR THE DEAF WHO HOLD A LICENSE UNDER THIS PART;**

(v) **ONE SHALL BE AN INTERPRETER FOR THE DEAF WHO HOLDS A LICENSE UNDER THIS PART AND OWNS OR IS AFFILIATED WITH AN INTERPRETER AGENCY;**

(vi) **TWO SHALL BE AFFILIATED WITH AN ENTITY THAT OPERATES AND IMPLEMENTS DEAF SERVICES IN AN EDUCATIONAL, LEGAL, OR MEDICAL SETTING;**

(vii) **THE SECRETARY OF DISABILITIES, OR THE SECRETARY'S DESIGNEE, AS AN EX OFFICIO NONVOTING MEMBER; AND**

(viii) **THE SECRETARY OF LABOR, OR THE SECRETARY'S DESIGNEE, AS AN EX OFFICIO NONVOTING MEMBER.**

(3) (i) The Governor shall appoint the members from a list of names submitted from a nomination process established by the Office.

(ii) **THE NOMINATION PROCESS SHALL INCLUDE OUTREACH TO UNDERREPRESENTED DEAF, DEAFBLIND, AND INTERPRETER COMMUNITIES.**

(iii) To the extent practicable, the members appointed under this section shall reflect the racial and geographic diversity of the State.

(b) Each member shall:

(1) be a resident of the State; and

(2) **EXCEPT FOR THE EX OFFICIO NONVOTING MEMBERS AND THE MEMBERS UNDER SUBSECTION (A)(2)(VI) OF THIS SECTION,** be proficient in American Sign Language.

(c) Before taking office, each member appointed to the Board shall take the oath or affirmation required by Article I, § 9 of the Maryland Constitution.

(d) (1) The term of a Board member is 2 years, beginning on the date of appointment.

(2) At the end of a term, a member continues to serve until a successor is appointed and qualifies.

(3) A member appointed after a term has begun serves only for the remainder of the term and until a successor is appointed and qualifies.

(4) A member may not serve more than three consecutive full terms.

(e) (1) The Governor may remove a member for incompetence, misconduct, neglect of duties, **TWO OR MORE SUCCESSIVE UNEXCUSED ABSENCES**, or other sufficient cause.

(2) The Governor shall remove a member who:

(i) ceases to meet the requirements under which the member was appointed under subsection (a) of this section; or

(ii) fails to attend at least 50% of the regularly scheduled meetings of the Board during any 12-month period.

9-2412.

(a) (1) The Board shall elect the chair from among its members.

(2) The term of the chair is 2 years.

(b) (1) The Board shall meet at least once each quarter at the times and places set by the Board.

(2) The Board may call special meetings at the request of:

(i) the chair;

(ii) the Director; or

(iii) a majority of the members of the Board.

(c) A majority of the **VOTING** members [then serving on the Board] is a quorum.

(d) A member of the Board:

(1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Board; but

(2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

9-2414.

(a) The Board shall:

- (1) license qualified individuals to provide sign language interpretation services;
- (2) on or before [July 1, 2024] ~~DECEMBER 31, 2026~~ JULY 1, 2027, establish and publish licensing requirements for sign language interpreting in all settings;
- (3) provide technical assistance to license applicants and other interested persons;
- (4) promote the profession of sign language interpreting, including providing workshops and trainings to raise public awareness and to facilitate professional development; and
- (5) perform any other duties assigned by the Director.

9-2415.

(a) [The] **AFTER COMPLETION OF THE REPORT REQUIRED UNDER SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION, THE** Board may establish criteria for the development of portfolios and separate requirements in the following specialist areas:

- (1) legal settings;
- (2) medical settings;
- (3) EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS;**
- ~~(3)~~ **(4)** behavioral health settings;
- ~~(4)~~ **(5)** language pairs other than American Sign Language and spoken English;
- ~~(5)~~ **(6)** conference interpreting;
- ~~(6)~~ **(7)** tactile and low-vision sign language interpretation services;
- ~~(7)~~ **(8)** intralinguistic translations and sign language interpretation; and
- ~~(8)~~ **(9)** any other specialist areas determined to be necessary by the Board.

(b) (1) AT LEAST 60 DAYS BEFORE THE BOARD PROMULGATES REGULATIONS TO ESTABLISH CRITERIA UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION, THE BOARD SHALL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1257 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE HOUSE GOVERNMENT, LABOR, AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE, ON:

(I) HOW NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CERTIFICATION STANDARDS DEFINE OR LIMIT SPECIALIST AREAS;

(II) THE NUMBER OF INTERPRETERS IN THE STATE AND NEIGHBORING STATES CERTIFIED IN SPECIALIST AREAS;

(III) AN EVALUATION OF HOW SEPARATE REQUIREMENTS FOR SPECIALIST AREAS MAY IMPACT ACCESS TO INTERPRETER SERVICES IN EACH SETTING; AND

(IV) RECOMMENDATIONS ON WHETHER, AND IN WHAT FORM, SPECIALTY LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE STATE.

(2) IN COMPLETING THE REPORT UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION, THE BOARD SHALL CONSULT WITH STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING:

(I) THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH;

(II) THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF;

(III) THE MARYLAND HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION;

(IV) INTERPRETERS AND INTERPRETER AGENCIES;

(V) THE MARYLAND JUDICIARY;

(VI) THE MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION;

(VII) THE MARYLAND STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION;

(VIII) THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENTS' ASSOCIATION OF MARYLAND; ~~AND~~

(IX) THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF BOARDS OF EDUCATION;

AND

~~(IX)~~ (X) THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES.**(3) THE OFFICE SHALL PROVIDE STAFF TO ASSIST THE BOARD IN COMPLETION OF THE REPORT REQUIRED UNDER THIS SUBSECTION.**

(C) The Board shall adopt regulations to:

(1) govern sign language interpretation services provided in a video remote interpreting setting;

(2) establish licensing and certification standards of interpreting agencies that do business in the State;

(3) **(I)** allow deaf and hard of hearing individuals to ~~determine~~ **INDICATE** whether they prefer sign language interpretation services being provided in a video remote interpreting setting or through in-person interpreting; and

(II) REQUIRE PUBLIC ENTITIES TO PROVIDE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS TO SUPPORT THE PREFERENCES INDICATED BY THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS UNDER ITEM (I) OF THIS ITEM, TO THE EXTENT PRACTICABLE AND IN COMPLIANCE WITH 28 C.F.R. § 35.160 AND THE FEDERAL AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990; AND

(4) provide sign language interpretation services in a video remote interpreting setting.

9-2419.

An applicant shall submit to the Board:

(1) a completed application on the form provided by the Board;

(2) payment of a nonrefundable application fee set by the Board; AND

(3) **(I)** proof of a valid nationally or regionally recognized certification or other certification approved by the Board; [and] OR

[(4)] (II) documentation of satisfactory completion of any other qualifications established by the Board.

9-2420.

(a) Subject to the provisions of this section, the Board may waive any requirement of this part for an applicant who is licensed to provide sign language interpretation services in another state.

(b) The Board [may] SHALL grant a waiver under this section only if the applicant:

(1) pays to the Board:

(i) the nonrefundable application fee set by the Board; and

(ii) the license fee set by the Board; and

(2) provides satisfactory evidence that, at the time the applicant was licensed in the other state, the applicant was required to meet the qualifications for licensure that were substantially equivalent to the qualifications in the State.

(c) The Board may grant a waiver under this section only if the state in which the applicant is licensed waives the qualifications of licensees of the State to a similar extent as the State waives the qualification requirements for individuals licensed in that state.

Chapter 269 of the Acts of 2023

SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

(a) ~~(1) Beginning~~ **EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION, BEGINNING [January 1, 2025] ~~JULY 1, 2027~~ JANUARY 1, 2028,** an individual who provides sign language interpretation services in the State shall meet the requirements of Title 9, Subtitle 24, Part III of the State Government Article, as enacted by Section 3 of this Act.

(2) BEGINNING JULY 1, 2028, AN INDIVIDUAL WHO PROVIDES SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION SERVICES IN AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING SHALL MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF TITLE 9, SUBTITLE 24, PART III OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, AS ENACTED BY SECTION 3 OF THIS ACT.

(b) The State Board of Sign Language Interpreters shall develop and implement a public awareness campaign to inform the public and relevant professionals of the licensing requirements of this Act.

(c) Until set by the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters by regulation, the fee for initial licensure under this Act is \$150.

SECTION 5. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the member of the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters who is required to have a license issued under this Act and who is appointed to the Board under § 9–2411 of the State Government Article, as enacted by Section 3 of this Act, before **[January 1, 2025] ~~JULY 1, 2027~~ JANUARY 1, 2028,** may satisfy the license requirement by holding a current nationally or regionally recognized

certification, as defined in § 9–2401 of the State Government Article, as enacted by Section 3 of this Act, or by meeting other criteria established by the Board.

Chapter 270 of the Acts of 2023

SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

(a) ~~(1) Beginning~~ **EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION, BEGINNING [January 1, 2025] ~~JULY 1, 2027~~ JANUARY 1, 2028,** an individual who provides sign language interpretation services in the State shall meet the requirements of Title 9, Subtitle 24, Part III of the State Government Article, as enacted by Section 3 of this Act.

(2) BEGINNING JULY 1, 2028, AN INDIVIDUAL WHO PROVIDES SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION SERVICES IN AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING SHALL MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF TITLE 9, SUBTITLE 24, PART III OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, AS ENACTED BY SECTION 3 OF THIS ACT.

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SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2026.

Approved by the Governor, April 28, 2026.