

SENATE BILL 645

P1

6lr2784
CF 6lr2786

By: **Senator King**

Introduced and read first time: February 6, 2026

Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **State Board of Sign Language Interpreters – Membership and Licensing**

3 FOR the purpose of expanding the membership of and altering the quorum requirements
4 for the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters; authorizing the Governor to
5 remove certain members of the Board under certain circumstances; altering the date
6 by which the Board must establish certain licensing requirements and by which sign
7 language interpreters must meet certain licensing requirements; and generally
8 relating to the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters.

9 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
10 Article – State Government
11 Section 9–2411, 9–2412, 9–2414(a), and 9–2415
12 Annotated Code of Maryland
13 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

14 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
15 Chapter 269 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2023
16 Section 4 and 5

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

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

22 **Article – State Government**

23 9–2411.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



(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 MEMBER; AND**

(viii) **THE SECRETARY OF LABOR, OR THE SECRETARY'S DESIGNEE, AS AN EX OFFICIO 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 MEMBERS AND THE MEMBERS UNDER SUBSECTION (A)(2)(VI) OF THIS SECTION,** be proficient in American Sign Language.

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

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

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

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

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

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

13 (2) The Governor shall remove a member who:

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

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

18 9–2412.

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

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

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

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

24 (i) the chair;

25 (ii) the Director; or

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

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

28 (d) A member of the Board:

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

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

4 9–2414.

5 (a) The Board shall:

6 (1) license qualified individuals to provide sign language interpretation
7 services;

8 (2) on or before [July 1, 2024] **DECEMBER 31, 2026**, establish and publish
9 licensing requirements for sign language interpreting in all settings;

10 (3) provide technical assistance to license applicants and other interested
11 persons;

12 (4) promote the profession of sign language interpreting, including
13 providing workshops and trainings to raise public awareness and to facilitate professional
14 development; and

15 (5) perform any other duties assigned by the Director.

16 9–2415.

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

20 (1) legal settings;

21 (2) medical settings;

22 (3) behavioral health settings;

23 (4) language pairs other than American Sign Language and spoken
24 English;

25 (5) conference interpreting;

26 (6) tactile and low–vision sign language interpretation services;

27 (7) intralinguistic translations and sign language interpretation; and

28 (8) 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 ASSOCIATION OF MARYLAND; AND

(IX) THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES.

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

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

Chapter 269 of the Acts of 2023

SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

(a) Beginning [January 1, 2025] **JULY 1, 2027**, 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.

(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**, 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) Beginning [January 1, 2025] **JULY 1, 2027**, 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.

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

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

6 SECTION 5. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the member of the State
7 Board of Sign Language Interpreters who is required to have a license issued under this
8 Act and who is appointed to the Board under § 9–2411 of the State Government Article, as
9 enacted by Section 3 of this Act, before **[January 1, 2025] JULY 1, 2027**, may satisfy the
10 license requirement by holding a current nationally or regionally recognized certification,
11 as defined in § 9–2401 of the State Government Article, as enacted by Section 3 of this Act,
12 or by meeting other criteria established by the Board.

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