

SENATE BILL 645

P1

6lr2784
CF HB 1192

By: **Senator King**

Introduced and read first time: February 6, 2026

Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

Senate action: Adopted

Read second time: March 3, 2026

CHAPTER _____

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; altering the
8 documents an applicant must submit to the Board; requiring the Board to grant a
9 waiver of certain requirements under certain circumstances; and generally relating
10 to the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters.

11 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
12 Article – State Government
13 Section 9–2401(a) and (o)
14 Annotated Code of Maryland
15 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

16 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
17 Article – State Government
18 Section ~~9–2407~~, 9–2411, 9–2412, 9–2414(a), ~~and~~ 9–2415, 9–2419, and 9–2420
19 Annotated Code of Maryland
20 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

21 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
22 Chapter 269 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2023

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 Section 4 and 5

2 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
3 Chapter 270 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2023
4 Section 4 and 5

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

7 **Article – State Government**

8 9–2401.

9 (a) In this subtitle the following words have the meanings indicated.

10 (o) “Office” means the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

11 9–2407.

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

15 (1) the activities of the Office;

16 (2) the status of programs and services facilitated by the Office;

17 (3) the activities of the Board, including:

18 (i) the number of sign language interpreters licensed by the Board;

19 [and]

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

22 1. DETERMINED BY THE LICENSEE’S HOME ADDRESS; OR

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

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

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

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

3 9–2411.

4 (a) (1) The Board consists of [seven] **11** members appointed by the Governor.

5 (2) Of the [seven] **11** members:

6 (i) one shall be a member of the Maryland Association of the Deaf;

7 (ii) one shall be a deafblind individual;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

29 (b) Each member shall:

1 (1) be a resident of the State; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

22 9-2412.

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

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

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

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

28 (i) the chair;

29 (ii) the Director; or

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

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

3 (d) A member of the Board:

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

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

7 9–2414.

8 (a) The Board shall:

9 (1) license qualified individuals to provide sign language interpretation
10 services;

11 (2) on or before [July 1, 2024] ~~DECEMBER 31, 2026~~ JULY 1, 2027,
12 establish and publish licensing requirements for sign language interpreting in all settings;

13 (3) provide technical assistance to license applicants and other interested
14 persons;

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

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

19 9–2415.

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

23 (1) legal settings;

24 (2) medical settings;

25 **(3) EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS;**

26 ~~(3)~~ **(4)** behavioral health settings;

27 ~~(4)~~ **(5)** language pairs other than American Sign Language and spoken
28 English;

1 (VI) THE MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION;

2 (VII) THE MARYLAND STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION;

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

5 (IX) THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF BOARDS OF EDUCATION;
6 AND

7 ~~(IX)~~ (X) THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES.

8 **(3) THE OFFICE SHALL PROVIDE STAFF TO ASSIST THE BOARD IN**
9 **COMPLETION OF THE REPORT REQUIRED UNDER THIS SUBSECTION.**

10 (C) The Board shall adopt regulations to:

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

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

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

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

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

25 9-2419.

26 An applicant shall submit to the Board:

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

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

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

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

5 9-2420.

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

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

11 (1) pays to the Board:

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

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

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

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

20 Chapter 269 of the Acts of 2023

21 SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

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

27 **(2)** **BEGINNING JULY 1, 2028, AN INDIVIDUAL WHO PROVIDES SIGN**
 28 **LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION SERVICES IN AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING SHALL MEET**
 29 **THE REQUIREMENTS OF TITLE 9, SUBTITLE 24, PART III OF THE STATE**
 30 **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~~ JANUARY 1, 2028,
10 may satisfy the license requirement by holding a current nationally or regionally recognized
11 certification, as defined in § 9–2401 of the State Government Article, as enacted by Section
12 3 of this Act, or by meeting other criteria established by the Board.

13 **Chapter 270 of the Acts of 2023**

14 SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

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32 enacted by Section 3 of this Act, before [January 1, 2025] ~~JULY 1, 2027~~ JANUARY 1, 2028,
33 may satisfy the license requirement by holding a current nationally or regionally recognized
34 certification, as defined in § 9–2401 of the State Government Article, as enacted by Section
35 3 of this Act, or by meeting other criteria established by the Board.

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

Approved:

Governor.

President of the Senate.

Speaker of the House of Delegates.