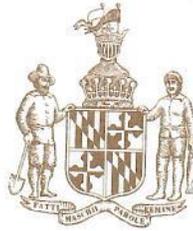


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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Bill 431 – Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act

February 9, 2021

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

There are over one million people in Maryland who are Deaf or hard of hearing, but Maryland is one of the very few states in the country to require standards or licensing requirements that would offer protection from unqualified or fraudulent interpreters. Unqualified interpreters can cause irreparable harm to an individual, especially in medical and legal settings.

The legislature has recognized that this is problematic and in the 2020 Joint Chairmen's Report (JCR), they requested that the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GODHH) provide a response on "ways to protect and serve users of sign language interpreting services." The GODHH responded with a thirteen page report and five different strategies. Their report can be found at: [2020_p18_GODHH_Interpreters.pdf](#) ([maryland.gov](#)).

One of the strategies mention in the report is creation of licensing for sign language interpreters. Twenty two states in the county have a licensing requirement of sign language interpreters. Senate Bill 431 – Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act – will set the framework for licensing in Maryland. I am also introducing 2 amendments. One adds language that recognizes that there is oral to sign, sign to oral, as well as sign to sign interpreting. The second amendment will require licensing for those individuals involved with video remote interpreting.

Deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Maryland deserve sign language interpreters that have the proper training and qualifications for the job and so I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 431 with amendments.