

Mister Chairman and Members of the House Committee on Health and Government Operations,

My name is Shelby Abdilah. I am a Hearing Interpreter and member of both the Potomac Chapter of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and Maryland Association of the Deaf. I live in Gaithersburg and work around Maryland. I am writing this testimony to ask you to support SB431 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act of 2021 sponsored by Senator King and Guzzone.

For too long, Maryland has had no mechanism for regulating people calling themselves sign language interpreters. As a result, there have been many instances of new signers, with no interpreter training, taking high stakes jobs such as medical, psychological and legal assignments and skewing the message so severely that the ramifications for the deaf individual have often been truly life or death. Even when the consequences aren't deadly, they have a major impact on the ability of deaf individuals to access employment, higher education, safety information, etc.

As a certified interpreter who is actively involved in mentoring up and coming interpreters, I see the necessity of licensure to protect working interpreters and our profession as a whole, but also to protect the next generation from unwittingly being put in circumstances above their skill level by unscrupulous businesses. Licensure, the complaint process provided for by the bill and the legal ramifications act as discouragement for these unethical practices.

I urge you to listen to the testimony from the Deaf community and see that the need for licensure of interpreters in the state of Maryland is long overdue.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Shelby Abdilah CI,CT