

House Bill 535 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
sponsored by Delegate Acevero

Madam Chairperson and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee:

My name is Kelsey Mitchell and I am a nationally certified interpreter(NIC, EIPA 4+) who has lived and working in Maryland and the DMV area for the last 10 years.

Interpreter licensure is desperately needed in Maryland. As one of only 3 states having no EIPA other certification requirement for interpreting working in schools from K-12, or the legal system, Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders have little to no way of verifying that the interpreters they are working with are qualified. While licensure is not a guarantee of quality, it at least provides Deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders the ability to have some form of accountability for interpreters who are not able to meet their needs.

The state of Maryland is home to a large number of Deaf professionals who work with interpreters in a variety of fields. Deaf people come from all walks of life, with varying life experiences, linguistic experiences. They deserve interpreters who they can understand and who understand them, and who are able to accurately and effectively interpret with them in all setting engaging with hearing people who are not fluent ASL users. Licensure is a step toward making that the expectation for every interpreted interaction.

The state of Maryland is home to a large number of highly qualified interpreters, however, supply does not always meet demand. Additionally, entities that are hiring interpreters often have no true way of vetting that the people they hire are qualified or even legitimate professional interpreters. Licensure is a way for business, government, and other entities hiring interpreters to ensure they are working with interpreters who have the necessary skills to do the work they have been hired to do.

I am in full support of creating a Maryland state licensure for sign language interpreters.

Thank you,

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