

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

My name is Traci Ison and I am a practicing sign language interpreter and resident of Maryland, and a Maryland small business owner. I obtained interpreter certification with the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) in 2000, and with the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) in 2009. I am the previous President of the Potomac Chapter of RID (PCRID) which is the D.C. and Maryland (joint) affiliate chapter of RID. I currently serve as an advisor to the PCRID Board of Directors, and as an advisor to the RID national conference. My first language is ASL. My father is Deaf and my mother is an interpreter. I grew up as a member of the Deaf community who has hearing. My leadership efforts come from the commitment the Deaf community is heard.

There are brilliant and talented Deaf people all over the world from various backgrounds and experiences whose contributions can provide solutions at a global level, and many of those people have chosen to reside in the state of Maryland. Great minds went into the creation of the Sign Language Interpreter Act, house bill ###. The establishment of licensing in Maryland is a structure that addresses the unworkability with the sign language interpreter industry and the communication accessibility for Deaf people in Maryland.

For the last decade, when a draft bill is brought forth to our Maryland representatives that addresses our state sign language interpreting industry, communication among stakeholders is in the spotlight. The Deaf, interpreter, and people who communicate in sign language consistently come together to communicate, acknowledge, and learn from one other. But to the hearing world, the communication culture of the Deaf community could be misunderstood for upset and discord. Historically, the reaction of Maryland representatives has been to withdraw support for the bill brought forth from the Deaf community. I assert what is needed and wanted is your stand for the Deaf community. It is clear to all stakeholders that something about the interpreting industry is not working and Deaf people are speaking out. This must be addressed with urgency by our leadership. The Deaf community's concerns can no longer go unheard. Our state representatives have the power to put an end to the risk, harm, and exploitation of Deaf citizens.

I request Maryland bring workability to the sign language interpreter profession and establish licensing for the practice of sign language interpreting.

Thank You,  
Traci Ison