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February 11, 2021

Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
2 West Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

RE: SB 464 – Education – Educational Interpreters – Certification Requirements

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to introduce Senate Bill 464. This bill will establish certification standards for the State’s educational interpreters for deaf children.

90% of the State’s deaf and hard of hearing children are born to hearing parents, so from the very outset of their lives, these children have a difficult time communicating with family members. When they get to school, it is essential that they are provided with trained and qualified interpreters who can adequately communicate to them the instructional information being provided by their teachers. Suppose when you were in school, you could only understand a small fraction of the words being uttered by your teachers, words like “the” and “house” but were not able to understand the more complicated and important words being uttered by your teachers?

45 states, including Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia and West Virginia, have adopted professional standards to qualify educational interpreters. Maryland is one of only five states that have no such standards. Educational interpreters perform a critical and essential role in educating our deaf and hard of hearing children. In Maryland, there are 150 part-time and full-time American Sign Language educational interpreters, and the quality and competence of them varies greatly. We need a baseline standard; otherwise, we won’t know how to assess and evaluate the performance of such interpreters.

Simply put, a deaf or hard of hearing student who communicates by using American Sign Language needs an educational interpreter proficient in American Sign Language. A student who communicates using Signed Exact English needs an educational interpreter proficient in Signed Exact English. And a student who relies on oral communication instead of signing to communicate needs an oral interpreter.

Senate Bill 464 requires educational interpreters in Maryland to be certified pursuant to certain national standards. These standards will kick into effect on or before July 1, 2028. Further, the bill requires that educational interpreters take continuing education in order to be recertified every four years. These educational credits are available at various institutions of higher education located in Maryland, including McDaniel College, Towson University and the Community College of Baltimore County.

For these reasons, I hope that you will give SB 464 a favorable report.



SB0464/323828/1

AMENDMENTS
PREPARED
BY THE
DEPT. OF LEGISLATIVE
SERVICES

08 FEB 21
09:13:02

BY: Senator West
(To be offered in the Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs Committee)

AMENDMENT TO SENATE BILL 464

(First Reading File Bill)

On page 4, in line 21, strike “**4.0**” and substitute “**3.7**”; in line 27, strike “**REGISTRY OF INTERPRETERS FOR THE DEAF**”; in line 28, strike “**SUCCESSFULLY**” and substitute “:

(I) SUCCESSFULLY”;

and in line 29, after “**DEVELOPMENT**” insert “**EVERY 4 YEARS; AND**

(II) UNLESS THE APPLICANT HOLDS A REGISTRY OF INTERPRETERS FOR THE DEAF CERTIFICATE, EARN A MINIMUM SCORE OF 4.0 ON AN EIPA”.

On page 5, in line 4, strike “**2028**” and substitute “**2026**”.