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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Bill 748 – Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act

March 3, 2022

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 that does not 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 country have licensing requirements for sign language interpreters. Senate Bill 748 – Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act – will set the framework for licensing in Maryland. I am also introducing one amendment that removes criminal penalties from the legislation and conforms the bill to the House cross-file.

Deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Maryland deserve sign language interpreters who have the proper training and qualifications for the job and so I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 748 with amendments.