

## Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Training Programs



### HB 748 Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act Senate Education Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

Testimony

Submitted by,

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Dear Honorable Representatives:

We are writing in reference to SB 0748 Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act of 2022, sponsored by Senator Nancy King, which will establish a licensure procedure for Maryland Sign Language Interpreters. We are the directors of the Community College of Baltimore County's Sign Language Interpreter Training Program and the Frederick Community College's ASL Interpreter Preparatory Program. Our programs are the only two programs in the state of Maryland that train interpreters to work with the Deaf. Deaf people need well-trained interpreters to provide them with accessibility per their rights outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act. Our programs provide students with an AAS in ASL Interpreting with the foundational skills necessary for a student to start their Interpreting profession. However, for our graduates to obtain national certification they also need to complete a baccalaureate degree or equivalent (120 college credits).

The licensing procedure established by this bill requires interpreters to obtain either a national certification through a national certification assessment provider, a regionally recognized certification assessment provider or other requirements established by the Board. Obtaining a full licensure is the ultimate goal, but this bill also allows for provisional licensure for novice interpreters (recent graduates) to obtain skills and experience to become fully licensed.

Maryland currently has no regulations which determine who can market themselves as an interpreter. Sadly, Maryland Deaf citizens often find themselves in situations where the interpreter that was hired for their appointment (doctor appointment, college class, job interview, etc.) is not qualified and in some cases has never been trained and/or does not actually know American Sign Language (ASL). Some Deaf children, who are mainstreamed in Maryland's K-12 system are being exposed to unqualified language models; stagnating their cognitive development and they have no voice.

This bill is an attempt to set up a robust licensing procedure, which will protect all Deaf individuals

(children and adults) in the state of Maryland. We support the bill as written with the following amendment:

- Removal of section 9-2435.

It is also important to acknowledge that the bill, as written, includes necessary parameters for interns in our ASL Interpreting Programs.

If you have any questions or would like more information please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

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