

Prince George's County Association of the Deaf



**Written Testimony
SB0748 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act
March 3, 2022**

Good Afternoon Chair Pinsky and Vice Chair Kagan. My name is Gabrielle Davis, I am the Prince George's County Association of the Deaf (PGCAD) President. I am thrilled to be here to talk with you about this important bill to our community.

This Bill is a consumer protection bill that will ensure the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community that we will have qualified interpreters. I personally heard a lot of stories from members of PGCAD about unqualified and fraudulent sign language interpreters. I am going to share with you one story.

In December of 2021, a woman had surgery and stayed in the ICU for several days. During her stay, there were several miscommunication between her, the interpreter, and Doctor/Nurses. Her daughter was there and heard and had to intervene because the interpreter did not interpret correctly. Later, we found out that this interpreter is not certified and qualified to interpret. When unqualified and/or fraudulent sign language interpreters are allowed to operate with impunity in the state of Maryland, resulting in egregious actions that have a significant effect on the communities they profess to serve, the costs are significant: physical, emotional, mental, and financial. If we had this bill, this would never happen to the woman.

With this bill, the Deaf, DeafBlind, and the Hard of Hearing communities in Maryland can be greatly assured that agencies, businesses, and organizations are legally obligated to hire licensed sign language interpreters in order to provide sufficient and appropriate communication access. These interpreters will operate with the knowledge that continued possession of their licenses hinge on acceptable performance and conduct. Otherwise, they will be held accountable by the licensure board, as outlined in the bill.

I am asking you to support the bill with amendment and end the unqualified and/or fraudulent sign language interpreters exhibit towards the communities they claim to serve in the State. Our communities have waited a long time for this overdue and very necessary consumer protection bill.

Thank you for your support!

Gabrielle Davis
President
Prince George's County Association of the Deaf