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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Testimony in Support of House Bill 1107 - Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act

Good afternoon Madam Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about House Bill 1107.

Currently, Maryland law does not sufficiently regulate or standardize licensing requirements for American Sign Language interpreters. This shortfall in Maryland law leads to unqualified, inadequate, and sometimes fraudulent interpreters. It is essential that we maintain high standards for ASL interpreters in the state so that the millions of Marylanders who are Deaf or hard of hearing have accessible pathways to be heard and understood.

House Bill 1107 is a response to the 2020 Joint Chairmen's Report (JCR) requested by the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GODHH) to provide a response on "ways to protect and serve users of sign language interpreting services." You can find the report [here](#), which details the issue at hand, policies in other states used to address the issue, and possible solutions for Maryland.

Twenty-two states already have licensing requirements for American Sign Language interpreters. Maryland has fallen behind protecting our Deaf and hard of hearing citizens. The report suggests legislation regulating and creating licensing requirements for interpreters could rectify this issue to address unqualified and fraudulent interpreters in the state. HB 1107 is a comprehensive piece of legislation to establish a long overdue licensing and regulatory system for ASL interpreters, policy framework recommended by the report to help ameliorate the problem.

I have submitted an amendment to remove any criminal penalties and jail-time for violators. This also conforms the bill to the Senate cross-file.

I respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 1107.