

SB 0346 Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act  
Environment Energy and Education Committee

Testimony Submitted by,  
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Certified ASL/English Interpreter

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February 13, 2023

Dear Honorable Representatives:

I am writing in reference to SB 0346 Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act of 2023, sponsored by Senator Nancy King, which will establish a licensure procedure for Maryland Sign Language Interpreters. I am a nationally certified ASL/English Interpreter and have been working professionally in the field for over 18 years, I have served in multiple roles at various interpreting agencies and on various non-profit or volunteer committees related to sign language interpretation, I have served on the local Registry of Interpreter board, I am currently serving on the Maryland Interpreter Licensure Bill committee and serve as the Program Manager and faculty member for the ASL Interpreter Preparatory Program at Frederick Community College. There are only two programs in the state of Maryland that train interpreters to work with the Deaf and they are The Community College of Baltimore County and Frederick Community College. Deaf people need well-trained interpreters to provide them with accessibility per their rights outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act. Those programs provide students with an AAS in ASL Interpreting with the foundational skills necessary for a student to start their Interpreting profession. It is important to acknowledge that the bill, as written, includes necessary parameters for interns in the ASL Interpreting Programs.

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. I support the bill as written.

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

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