



MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential

15 West Gude Drive ♦ Suite 100 ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850

BILL: Senate Bill 645

TITLE: State Board of Sign Language Interpreters - Membership and Licensing

DATE: February 26, 2026

POSITION: Support with Amendments

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

CONTACT: Patricia Ursprung, Coordinator, Legislative Affairs

The Montgomery County Board of Education (Board) supports Senate Bill 645 with several important amendments.

This bill alters the composition of the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters Board and proposes additional alterations to the Sign Language Interpreters Act, signed into law in 2023. These proposed revisions establish statewide licensure requirements for sign language interpreters, with licensing criteria finalized by December 31, 2026, and implementation beginning July 1, 2027. The bill regulates interpreters broadly, including those providing services in school settings, and allows applicants to qualify through certification or other Board-approved pathways. For Montgomery County Public Schools, this legislation has significant implications for workforce qualifications, labor agreements, compensation structures, recruitment, and service continuity for students who rely on educational interpreters.

While the Board supports the development of statewide professional standards, which may strengthen the quality and consistency of interpreting services provided to students and families, the Board is requesting that the committee consider some amendments that acknowledge the realities of providing interpreting services in the K-12 education setting.

The proposed conceptual amendments include:

- **Establish an education-specific licensure category for K–12 educational interpreters.** By not identifying Educational Interpreters as a distinct workforce group, there is a risk that K-12 implementation and pipeline challenges could be overlooked during the development of regulations.



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- **Include clear transition provisions and implementation timelines that protect current employees and prevent service disruptions.** Unclear transition provisions for current employees may create staffing instability or service disruptions if not properly addressed.
- **Provide flexibility in qualification equivalencies aligned with school-based competencies.** Current interpreters, especially those who are nearing the end of their career, might be hesitant to devote the time and money needed to obtain licensure. Allowing qualification equivalencies may limit the risk of losing individuals who have demonstrated skills needed to be successful in their field, but who are not interested in, or able to complete, a traditional licensure pathway.
- **Allow sufficient implementation time and fiscal planning to mitigate recruitment and retention risks.** Additional professional learning, renewal, and compliance requirements may require resource planning and structured timelines to avoid workforce attrition. School systems need time to address these concerns before any new requirements go into effect.

Montgomery County Board of Education also supports and joins in the efforts of the Public Schools Superintendents' Association of Maryland and the Maryland Association of Boards of Education to amend this bill to better suit the needs to school systems.

Because the Montgomery County Board of Education supports the goal of the bill and acknowledges the importance of having qualified interpreters in our schools, it supports Senate Bill 645 and urges a **favorable** report with the amendments proposed herein.