

February 24, 2026

Senator Feldman, Senator Kagan, and members of the Maryland Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment:

I am a deaf citizen of the State of Maryland, and a member of both the Maryland Association of the Deaf and the Potomac Chapter of Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. I live in Takoma Park, in District 20, and am represented in the Senate by Sen. David Moon.

I am writing to you today to oppose the proposed SB0645, State Board of Sign Language Interpreters (SBSLI): Membership and Licensing. This bill, as now written, raises serious concerns for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing communities, the members of which are directly impacted by the decisions made by the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters (SBSLI).

Specifically:

- This bill dilutes Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing representation on SBSLI. It is my strong belief that the individuals most directly impacted by the Board's decisions must retain meaningful representation and authority in matters affecting their access, safety, and civil rights. A time-honored tenet in the Deaf community is "Nothing about us, without us," and this is demonstrated in many nonprofit organization boards and other policy and decision-making groups by their requirement of majority and/or significant cross-section deaf representation.
- The bill increases representation from groups that have historically caused significant harm to the Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing communities. This contradicts the original purpose of SBSLI, which was created to protect consumers of sign language interpreting services and prevent further harm.

Increased restrictions on SBSLI, particularly through expanded collaboration with stakeholders such as state agencies, may weaken consumer protections and undermine the rights of Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing individuals, potentially leading to further harm.

The original licensure law and current regulations are the result of more than 15 years of collaboration among Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing community members and key stakeholders. These policies were carefully crafted to ensure consumer protection and uphold professional standards. Making sweeping changes at this stage undermines that work and continues a longstanding pattern of marginalization.

I respectfully urge you to oppose this bill.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration of this important matter.

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