



**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates
Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
March 31, 2026**

**Board of Education
of Howard County**

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**SB0645: FAVORABLE with AMENDMENTS
State Board of Sign Language Interpreters - Membership and Licensing**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **State Board of Sign Language Interpreters - Membership and Licensing** with amendments to address key procedural aspects that will assist interpreters in making the shift to licensure in Maryland.

SB0645 proposes structural and administrative updates to the Maryland State Board of Sign Language Interpreters. The legislation seeks to expand board membership from seven to eleven individuals, ensuring broader representation from the deaf, deafblind, and professional interpreter communities. Key changes include granting the Governor the authority to remove board members for poor attendance and extending the deadlines for establishing and obtaining mandatory professional licenses. Additionally, the board is tasked with conducting a comprehensive study on specialized certifications for legal and medical settings before implementing new regulations.

Following passage of the Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act in 2023 which established a licensing and regulatory system for sign language interpreters, Maryland moved towards equitable and elevated access for members of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. Students and families within the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) and across Maryland deserve to have high-quality interpretation services as part of their educational experience.

In May 2026, following the initial deadline for licensure regulation creation in the law, the Maryland State Board of Sign Language Interpreters issued regulations which raised major concerns for local school systems and sign language professionals working in the education field. After months of deliberations, the regulations were ultimately held until this year's legislative session to determine the best avenue forward for stakeholders.

SB0645 attempts to address the concerns that arose from the regulatory process, which staff and the Board appreciate. Of the amendments made by the Senate before passage to this Committee, the shift in deadlines between establishing and publishing general licensing requirements and the time by which those in an educational setting must meet the requirements is an improvement over the original six-month proposal. Interpreters need time for certification, with the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment – EIPA taking as long as one year to return the results. Time should also



be allotted for local board of education to budget for any expected changes in salaries due to licensure requirements.

The bill's addition of two members for individuals affiliated with an implementing agency in an educational, legal, or medical setting will bring additional representation to the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters. While the increase in membership in general is a positive, filling seats specific to interpreters for the deaf with those who are licensed may be difficult. The perspective of an unlicensed interpreter may be important to this conversation, especially as the process and regulations for obtaining licensure are formulated.

With these amendments, we urge a FAVORABLE report on SB0645 from this Committee.