

February 23rd, 2026

Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

Maryland Senate
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB1192 – UNFAVORABLE

Dear Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Helen Avner, and I am an ASL interpreter living and working in Maryland. I write to respectfully request an unfavorable report on HB1192.

The 2023 Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act was passed after years of advocacy by Deaf, DeafBlind, DeafDisabled, and Hard-of-Hearing Marylanders who shared their lived experiences and documented harms before this body. The General Assembly responded by establishing a statewide licensure system designed to:

- Protect consumers
- Establish minimum competency standards
- Create a formal complaint and enforcement pathway
- Ensure accountability in medical, legal, educational, and behavioral health settings

HB1192 makes substantial structural changes before that system has been fully implemented.

Specifically, the bill:

- Expands the Board to 11 members
- Reserves 4 voting seats for ex officio and government-agency affiliated members
- Reduces independent licensed interpreter and consumer representation
- Allows Board action to occur without a practitioner or consumer majority present

Professional licensing boards are structured to exercise independent regulatory judgment in the public interest. Expanding institutional representation departs from Maryland's established licensing model and risks weakening the independent oversight framework enacted in 2023.

HB1192 also delays full licensure implementation until July 1, 2027, extending the period during which consumers lack a fully enforceable statewide standard and an operational complaint pathway.

In addition, the bill inserts non-standard procedural barriers before specialty standards in high-risk settings may even be drafted. This further delays protections where competency safeguards are most critical.

In 2023, the General Assembly enacted this framework to protect consumers and ensure accountability. HB1192 alters that framework before it has had the opportunity to function as designed and risks weakening the very protections the Act was intended to provide.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to issue an unfavorable report on this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Helen Avner, ASL Interpreter

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