

To Legislators regarding SB32 Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired

In my reading of this bill I have the following items I would like to bring to your attention:

- 1) It states that CDHI will be placed under DSS. Does this mean only the interpreting department is kept, or does it include the counseling department as well? It is clear that the interpreting department is being moved under DSS due to subsequent comments regarding to interpreting. However, I see no reference to the counseling department being moved. This is an important issue. There is paucity of counseling and case management services for the deaf throughout the state. Our agency FSW is located in Bridgeport and we have one part time clinician, one full time case manager and one part time case manager servicing the deaf population mainly in the southwest portion of the state. If the intention of this bill is to close out CDHI's counseling department it will have a tremendous impact on the deaf in the Hartford and surrounding areas. It will put an extra burden on agencies like ours with limited staffing to handle any additional case loads. In addition, DSS has already cut funds to our service and if this bill eliminates CDHI's counseling department, how will agencies like ours with funding cuts for this type of service fill in the gap? Connecticut does not have mass transit and many of the deaf clients who need this type of service do not have transportation to come to our agency in Bridgeport. Deaf clients due to their communication issues cannot use local resources without the use of interpreters. Many agencies do not have funding source to pay for interpreting services, so this will further isolate this specialized population from services that they rightfully should have. This has legal implications.
- 2). Under section 4 (b) dealing with registration to interpret in this state. There is no mention of registration fees. Many states do have registration fees for licensing to work in the state. Usually the fees cover cost of record keeping, licenses as well as extra monies to help develop better services. The State of CT is in a budget crisis, why aren't you including registration fees? As a certified interpreter, I would be willing to pay the registration fees, knowing that it would help develop better services and help the budget deficit.
- 3) With regard to Section 4 (c), the statute as written permits an interpreter to work in the field if the person has passed the written test and has graduated from an interpreter training program. However, the statute does not require that the interpreter go through a screening process so that his or her interpreting skills can be assessed. The fact that a person has passed a written examination and graduated from an interpreter training program does not guarantee that he or she can communicate effectively for the deaf population. This statute also overlooks a person who has passed the written and did not attend an interpreter training program but has excellent interpreting skills and bars them from working at all in this state. A screening process is particularly important where, as here, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and the National Association for the Deaf (NAD) performance certification requirement is waived. I recommend that the statute be amended to establish a performance screening board with an appropriate fee charge to applicants to cover any costs incurred.

4) There is also another loop hole that needs to be looked at: the statute only affects interpreters who receive compensation for their interpreting. Does this mean that an unqualified interpreter who wants to do medical or legal interpreting without being compensated can do so despite their limited interpreting ability? In my opinion this could have devastating consequences to the unsuspecting deaf consumers. In my opinion this language should be amended to state that an interpreter regardless of whether compensated or not for the interpreting to pass the state screening process if they do not possess a RID or NAD certification and follow the guidelines set for the required certification for the various settings.

5) There are out of state video remote companies that provide interpreting services to various locations in Connecticut. Those interpreters should also pay a registration fee to do work in this state and follow the state statute as well.

In Summary, I realize during this budget crisis certain cuts, streamlining has to occur, but not at the expense of cutting off the life line to a group of people that have extreme challenges that the rest of the population doesn't have to deal with. Please give thoughtful considerations to my suggestions for improving services and gaining ways to bring in monies to help alleviate the budget crisis.

Thank you
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