

To Human Services Committee on Raised Bill 6941

My name is Rachel Spillane and I am a certified Interpreter for the Deaf.

I was a Director of Deaf Services/Interpreting Services at FSW for 5 years prior to my retirement two years ago. In the state of Connecticut there is a limited pool interpreters, and it really takes two or more agencies to cover state's needs, private industry needs, educational needs etc. The problem with this proposed bill is two fold: it deprives the deaf person choice of interpreter that fits their communication needs as well as the timing of the request for interpreting services; if the interpreter request is delayed from DORS to an outside agency then there is a high probability that request will not filled, thereby denying access to communication and services. This is why this bill was previously dropped during the Rowland Administration. (I have enclosed the article describing this bill being dropped during the Rowland Administration.)

The communication needs varies from one deaf person to another as well as the setting dictates specialized needs beyond interpreting skills. For example in the mental health setting the deaf client may have a successful therapy with an interpreter who may not work for DORS, so why deprive that client the communication access that is best suited by an interpreter that doesn't work for DORS? To ensure a deaf client's choice there should be a waiver statement saying that the state agency has the right to contact an outside interpreter agency when deemed appropriate, otherwise this bill could oppress the very population we are trying to service.

Almost all interpreting agencies require at least five-business days notice of a request for interpreting services. If DORS cannot fill the state request, the request may end up being last minute to outside agencies thereby the chances of that request being filled is next to none which leaves the deaf person without access to communication. There has to be a stated timeline when DORS needs to pass on the request to an outside agency to guarantee interpreter coverage. There also needs to be a statement to allow the state agency the flexibility to contact outside interpreter agency first when certain conditions exist.

It has been stated that it is cost effective to use state interpreters for state business. Has there been a cost analysis proving this point? It would be helpful to know if this is a true statement especially during this budget crisis that the state is facing.

Many states do not have a State Interpreter Agency like DORS; instead they have private interpreter agencies that fill the interpreter needs. Bill 6941 in its present form restricts client choice, competition, cause unlawful restraint of trade and is an attempt to establish a monopoly. This Bill is inconsistent with the State's long-standing support of the deaf community, small business and competition in the market place

Thank you.

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The FY98-99 budget contained a proposal that reduced funding for interpreter services provided by the then Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired (now the Department of Rehabilitation Services).

The Hartford Courant reported at the time that "the commission has trouble filling requests for licensed interpreters, said Downes and Valerie R. Marino, commission director. The estimated cost-savings from the privatization plan, Downes contends, was not the driving reason for the proposal."

http://articles.courant.com/1997-03-26/news/9703260323_1_interpreters-services-part-time-interpreters-privatization

Prior to passage of the budget, if someone requested the assistance of an interpreter in a court action, administrative procedure or similar meeting, the Commission would be required to make an interpreter available. The Commission was also required to make interpreters available to human service agencies.

Post passage, the bill eliminated this provision and instead required that individual providing interpreter services would be required to be certified by the National Association of the Deaf and be registered with the Department. The Department would continue to provide interpreter services, however, they would not automatically be the first group called to provide the services.

Currently, DORS provide interpreter services for a fee to agencies and individuals, except that court based interpreters remain free for individuals.