I submit this testimony today in support of Raised Bill 7230: An Act Concerning Interpreter Standards and Improving Access to Public Spaces for Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing Persons.

For many Deaf and hard of hearing individuals, qualified ASL interpreters provide vital access to information. In medical settings, interpreters ensure access to critical medical information necessary when making important health decisions. In educational settings, interpreters are the conduit between a student’s course curriculum and academic success.

Qualified interpreters are necessary to accurately, effectively and appropriately convey information to, and on the behalf of, Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for individuals lacking appropriate credentials to present themselves as “communication facilitators” and attempt to fill the interpreting role. The negative consequence of this, of course, is that the Deaf and hard of hearing consumers relying on this service fall victim to misinformation, misunderstanding, and misinterpretation.

The establishment of interpreting standards will ward against this disservice and protect Connecticut’s Deaf and hard of hearing citizens. I support Bill No. 7230’s assertion that all persons providing interpreting services must meet all applicable certification requirements as developed by the State of Connecticut Interpreting Standards Board. I further support the bill’s assertion that all persons providing interpreting services shall register, annually, with the Department of Rehabilitation Services. Together, these mandates will ensure that Connecticut’s Deaf and hard of hearing citizens are receiving appropriate interpreting services from qualified interpreters.

Bill No. 7230 also authorizes the improved access to public spaces for persons who are deaf, deaf-blind or hard of hearing – particularly that any television in use and located in a public area must have closed
captioning enabled while the place of public accommodation is open and accessible to the public. This mandate will undoubtedly benefit all patrons, including those who are not deaf, deaf-blind or hard of hearing, since these televisions are often located in high-volume environments that are not conducive to the successful audible transmission of featured televised content. Enabling closed captioning on televisions located in public spaces will ensure total accessibility for all visitors – deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing alike.