Bill No.: HB-7230
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING INTERPRETER STANDARDS AND IMPROVING ACCESS TO PUBLIC SPACES FOR DEAF, DEAF-BLIND AND HARD OF HEARING PERSONS.
Vote Date: 3/19/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 3/7/2019
File No.: 

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:
The reason for this bill is to improve the interpreter standards and access to public spaces for those in the state who are deaf, deaf/blind or hard of hearing.

Substitute Language for House Bill 7230 Removes section 2, establishing a new interpreting standards board; removes certain definitions not used again in bill; and adds new subsection regarding nonprofit entity to handle complaints; removes sec. 3 regarding closed captioning requirements for televisions in public spaces as an item to be handled in the upcoming working group and changes title accordingly.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
Amy Porter, Commissioner, Department of Rehabilitation Services; is in support for ongoing efforts to ensure high-quality interpreting for all Connecticut residents that are blind, hard of hearing or deaf-blind. She does express concerns about specific language of this proposed legislation. The concerns of the Department entail the unavailable additional expenditures that would be necessary to support the requirements of the Advisory Board for Persons who are deaf or Hard of Hearing. Another concern in regards to the proposed language is the assessment of fines and professional / public punishments against any person non-compliant and the task of the Department to adopt regulations of recommended changes to interpreter qualifications.
Connecticut Hospital Association; addresses the intention of this bill is to strengthen and standardize the requirements concerning the qualifications of interpreters serving the deaf and hard of hearing communities. However, they are concerned that the language and provisions of this legislation will significantly decrease the already limited interpreter pool in Connecticut.

Melvin Walker, M.Ed., President, Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf; commends the Human Services efforts in introducing this legislation on behalf of strengthening services for the deaf community.

Sandra Inzinga, President, Connecticut Association of the Deaf; is in support of this legislation because the current law that is place is outdated and no longer fits the needs of people of Connecticut.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

William A. Petit, Jr., MD, State Representative (R), Connecticut General Assembly; strongly urges the passing of this legislation to help hearing impaired individuals of the State of Connecticut with the development of proper standards for becoming an interpreter to meet and enhance the advocacy needs of state residents who rely on sign language interpreters.

Leslie Warren, Founder and CEO, CoSign Ct; supports the content of this bill in its entirety and addresses the impact of the de-centralizing of services has done as far as forcing deaf consumers, clients and interpreting companies and the economic status out of the state.

MarySue Owens, M.ED, NADV, CSC, SC: L; is in support of this legislation.

Christina Stevens, President, Connecticut Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf; is in support of this legislation due to the lack of interpreters within the state of Connecticut and how important it is to have interpreters within the state of Connecticut that knows the needs of the community, opposed to an out of state interpreter. She expresses the cut of the interpreting unit in DORS caused an array of issues in availability of interpreters for the hearing impaired.

Susan Yankee, Advisory Board for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; believes this bill will create job opportunities and enhance Connecticut’s economic status.

Keith J. Vinci, Former Sign Language Interpreting Coordinator; stands in support of this legislation. He emphasizes the definitions included in this bill identifies the specific levels, certification and experiences required for the intent of this bill. He encourages that this legislation will assist Connecticut in compliance with national interpreting standards and the protection of the rights of equal access for the deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing citizens of Connecticut.

Jeffrey Bravin, Executive Director, American School for the Deaf; is in support of this bill. He emphasizes how qualified interpreters are necessary to accurately, effectively, and appropriately convey information to, and on behalf of, those who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Failing to source adequate interpreters often leads to misinformation, misunderstanding and misinterpretation.
Dr. Harvey Corson; has concerns that while DORS handles the issuance of interpreter identification cards, they do not provide direct interpreting services. He feels as though there is no state-wide leadership on the needs of interpreting standards or follow-up on concerns regarding interpreter issues. He supports the underlying legislation and would like to see it strengthened going further.

June Freeman; is in support of this legislation; as she feels we need to clarify and strengthen our interpreting service in the state of Connecticut.

LeRoy Terrio; is in support of this legislation; but feels as though it should be revised to include the person’s right to choose their own interpreter.

Brynn Hickey, Disabilities Network, of Eastern CT; supports this legislation.

Sara C. Gerhold, Canton, CT; supports this legislation.

Sarah D’Agostino, Vernon, Ct; is in support of this legislation.

Suzanne Terrio, ED.M., C.S.C., C.I. C., Court Interpreter; is in support of this legislation.

Susan V. Pederson, West Hartford, Ct; is in support of this legislation.

James Pederson, West Hartford, Ct; is in support of this legislation.

Milmaglyn Morales, Pre-certified deaf Interpreter and Deaf Individual; is in support of this legislation.

Zaiant Echevarria; is in support of this legislation.

Beth Davenport; is in support of this legislation.

Nicholas Dionne, Sign language Interpreter, Bristol, CT; is in support of this legislation.

Marcus Springer, Cromwell, CT; is in support of this legislation.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Rachael Spillane, M.Ed, CSC, OT, Interpreter, RID; is opposition of the this bill due to its current context. She has recommended some changes in hopes to meet the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing community. She suggests (1) removing the captioning from this proposed bill, (2) add the word Consumer Preference with a waiver to (Lines 196-199), (3) give the waiver to staff that do not have a interpreting certificate but works in settings that may need them to interpret without receiving penalties for doing so. (4) add We the deaf People to the Interpreting Standards Board, (5) remove sanctions language and a substitute
language that states any complaints that come in will be referred to the proper entities and (6) allowing other states besides Massachusetts in interpreter screening.

Melissa Marshall, J.D., Coordinator, Ct Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance; is in opposition of this legislation.

Alex B. Witkowski, Treasurer, Connecticut Deaf Senior Citizens; is in opposition of this legislation.

Vincent Valanzuolo, New Haven, CT; is in opposition of this legislation.

Robin Crispino, Southington, Ct; is in opposition of this legislation.

Joanna Baldwin, New Hartford; is in opposition of this legislation.

Kim A. Silva and John Silva; is in opposition of this legislation.

Peter King, Norwich, CT; is in opposition of this legislation.

Martha Heron; is in opposition of this legislation.

George Wilkinson; is in opposition of this legislation.

Charles M. Avena, DI; is in opposition of this legislation as written.

Andre LJ Simons; is in opposition of this legislation as written.

Kara McBride; is in opposition of this legislation.

Kelly Bishop; is in opposition of this legislation.

Sue Shatney, Haddam Neck, CT; is in opposition of this legislation.

Reported by:   Noemi Hammonds       Date: March 28, 2019