
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5230

AN ACT CONCERNING STANDARDS FOR INTERPRETERS FOR DEAF, DEAFBLIND AND HARD OF HEARING PERSONS.

SUMMARY

This bill makes several changes related to interpreters registered with the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS).

Existing law establishes qualifications for interpreters generally and additional requirements for interpreting in educational, medical, or legal settings. Under the bill, settings that are not educational, medical, or legal are “community settings” and may include everyday life activities such as information sharing, employment, social services, entertainment, and civic and community engagements. The bill retains existing qualification requirements for these settings.

For medical and legal settings, the bill expands the acceptable qualifications for registered interpreters to include holding an Approved Deaf Interpreter credential from the Massachusetts Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The bill makes a minor change to specify that the circumstances under which interpreters must be credentialed for medical settings are those in which “physical health, mental health, or both” are discussed, rather than those in which “health and wellness” are discussed.

The bill establishes penalties for certain acts of false representation. It also eliminates a provision allowing people to report violations of interpreter credentialing laws to the state’s protection and advocacy system (i.e., Disability Rights Connecticut).

The bill requires ADS to categorize interpreters on its online list of registered interpreters by the settings for which they are qualified. It also requires ADS, the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), and

the Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide information on certain services on their websites.

Lastly, the bill makes technical and conforming changes (e.g., updating terminology by changing from “deaf-blind” to “deafblind”; replacing references to the Department of Rehabilitation Services with ADS).

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2022

WEBPAGE REQUIREMENTS

The bill requires several agencies to provide online information on services. Specifically, it requires

1. ADS to establish a webpage with information on services for deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing people, including services it provides and those provided by DCF, DMHAS, and DSS and
2. DSS, DMHAS, and DCF, on their websites, to maintain information on services for people with disabilities and link to ADS’s page on services for deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing people.

FALSE REPRESENTATION PENALTIES

The bill makes it a class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500, 3-months imprisonment, or both, for someone to (1) engage in willful or fraudulent misrepresentation in an attempt to register with ADS or (2) falsely represent himself or herself as registered. However, an interpreter is not guilty of the latter merely because his or her registration renewal was delinquent for up to 30 days.

BACKGROUND

Related Bill

HB 5224 (File 198), favorably reported by the General Law Committee, contains (1) the same provisions expanding qualifications for medical and legal settings and establishing penalties, and (2) similar provisions on agency website requirements.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 20 Nay 0 (03/24/2022)