

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5230

AN ACT CONCERNING STANDARDS FOR INTERPRETERS FOR DEAF,

Title: DEAFBLIND AND HARD OF HEARING PERSONS.

Vote Date: 3/24/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/10/2022

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

H.B. 5230 will increase and strengthen standards for interpreters for deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals. This bill will help individuals with these disabilities better navigate through the world, ensuring that they are able to experience what hearing people experience by utilizing interpreters who register with the Department of Aging and Disability Services. This registry helps validate that the individuals who are hired to provide interpreting services are qualified and credible.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language for this bill adds "community setting" and standards; requirements for agency website information on services offered. This will improve accessibility and create a hub of services and resources available for deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing individuals.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Commissioner of the Department of Aging and Disability Services, Amy Porter, supports the bill and appreciates the inclusivity of people who are Deafblind. The Commissioner appreciates the ability to expand to use interpreters accredited by Massachusetts. ADS looks forward to creating a more comprehensive and central information resource envisioned by the bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Assistant Majority Leader of the Connecticut General Assembly, Representative Robin Comey, supports the bill. Following a significant decline in the number of certified interpreters in the state, this policy change to accept credentials will support the lack of providers in the current environment. Comey is also supportive of the website where all information can be disseminated to residents throughout the state.

House Republican Caucus of the Connecticut General Assembly support this bill. The shortage of individuals who are qualified to provide interpreting services in medical and legal settings will be helped by reducing the barriers to qualification and providing a grace period for qualified interpreters to renew their registrations.

Connecticut Hospital Association supports the bill. They are hopeful that the passage of the bill will increase the number of available interpreters in Connecticut, who are needed badly to fill gaps in the existing interpreter pool.

Chair of CAD Legislative and Education Committee, Dr. Harvey Corson, supports the bill but is concerned that there is no recognition or provision for Community Interpreting setting. Corson proposes new language defining "community setting" to improve overall effectiveness of implementing interpreter standards in various settings across the state. This concern was addressed in the substitute language.

President of Connecticut Council of Organizations Serving the Deaf, Sandra Inzinga, supports the bill, but highlights it is missing the category of Community Interpreting. Community interpreting is the most prevalent area of interpreting service provided in the state. This concern was addressed in the substitute language.

Advocate at Disability Rights Connecticut, Marissa Rivera, supports the bill with requested changes. Rivera suggests updating the definition section, updating the definition of "medical setting." Rivera suggests that interpreters who misrepresent themselves as registered sign language interpreters be removed from the list. The ADS website should be more beneficial for all age groups in the Deaf Community. Rivera urges more acceptable credentials for educational, legal, and medical settings. Rivera suggests that the bill address the loophole for in-person interpreters traveling from out of state. Rivera also suggests that the bill should include information about the process for receiving or forwarding complains regarding unqualified interpreters.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Molly Lukiwsky

Date: 3/28/2022