

Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



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Senate 0780

The Health and Human Services Committee

State House – Room 212

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My name is Steven A. Florio and I am the Executive Director of Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. This commission is known as a one-stop center on all Deaf and Hard of Hearing matters. We deal with all deaf and hard of hearing individuals' needs every day whether they need resources, referrals, and training. That includes providing the Interpreter Referral Service.

On behalf of the RI CDHH, we support this bill to have the language changed to reflect today's standards.

Please go to page 9, line 16.

The RI CDHH supports this portion, however, I would like to see some of the language changed to reflect that the non-licensed interpreters must register how many hours they are expected to work.

This current bill does not have the "teeth" to ensure that non-licensed individuals are working up to the maximum 25 hours of interpreting allowed in RI. Most importantly, this bill does not mention how to track their hours. The language may be added, "and as set forth in regulations promulgated by the board." This would improve the controlled environment and prevent fraud.

There is no language of consequence for those people do not have the license to interpret. Currently, many customers do not know where to file a complaint and who would discipline the individuals who do not possess a license. I would recommend that the language be added, "An individual who violates the law shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction shall be fined not exceeding five hundred dollars (\$500). The punishment for frequent offenders may be decided by the courts at their discretion but the fines can not be lower than one thousand dollars (\$1,000)."

These would close out the loopholes for those non-licensed interpreters to work in RI. The license program is proven very successful since the bill was passed in 1999 and became effective in 2000. The quality standard of interpreters has been raised to a higher bar. A good percentage of interpreters has stepped up to take training and eventually obtained the proper certification. I commend you all for this success.

In conclusion, on behalf of the RI CDHH, we support this bill with the recommended amendment.

I want to thank you for giving me an opportunity to share our position with you and I strongly encourage you to take serious consideration. For some reason, if more research is needed on this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me for more resources that would help you to make a better decision. I can be reached by e-mail, SFLORIO@CDHH.RI.GOV.

Honorably Submitted by:

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