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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**SPONSOR STATEMENT**

**Senate Bill 346 – Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act**

February 14, 2023

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

There are over one million people in Maryland who are Deaf or hard of hearing, but Maryland is one of the very few states in the country that does not require standards or licensing requirements that would offer protection from unqualified or fraudulent interpreters. Unqualified interpreters can cause irreparable harm to an individual, especially in medical and legal settings.

The legislature has recognized that this is problematic and in the 2020 Joint Chairmen's Report (JCR), they requested that the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GODHH) provide a response on "ways to protect and serve users of sign language interpreting services." The GODHH responded with a thirteen page report and five different strategies. Their report can be found at: [2020\\_p18\\_GODHH\\_Interpreters.pdf](https://www.godhh.org/2020_p18_GODHH_Interpreters.pdf) ([maryland.gov](https://www.maryland.gov)).

One of the strategies mentioned in the report is the creation of a licensing requirement for sign language interpreters. Twenty two states in the country have licensing requirements for sign language interpreters. Senate Bill 346 – Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act – will set the framework for licensing in Maryland.

Deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Maryland deserve sign language interpreters who have the proper training and qualifications for the job and so I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 346.