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Usherla DeBerry
Director

TO: Whom it may concern
FROM: Usherla DeBerry, Ed.S.
Director, Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
SUBJECT: Departmental Proposal Summary
DATE: August 29, 2025

The proposed changes to the Maryland Sign Language Interpreter Act aim to diversify the members of the board to provide inclusion in decision-making and application approval. The current makeup of the board is a total of seven members, one MDAD representative, one PCRID representative, one member who is DeafBlind, and four community members.

With this departmental proposal, the new makeup will remove the PCRID representative. This will provide an opportunity for an interpreter in the state of Maryland to serve as a licensed board member without the limitations of these requirements. This seat will be reserved for a licensed interpreter.

The board will continue to include a representative of the Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD), a DeafBlind member, as well as 4 community members, with 2 being Deaf. They must all have professional experience that includes the regular use of interpreters or the regular provision of sign language interpretation services. The composition of the board must be 51% Deaf, meaning four out of seven members must be either Deaf, DeafBlind, or Hard of Hearing.

In addition to the board's composition, the Board is also seeking a legislative change to State Government § 9-2419, which describes the application requirements for licenses. Instead of requiring applicants to provide documentation of certification AND satisfaction of other criteria, the Board does not want documentation of certification to be required in all applications. One possible change is to simplify the "and" to "or" as indicated below:

An applicant shall submit to the Board:

- (1) a completed application on the form provided by the Board;
- (2) payment of a nonrefundable application fee set by the Board;
- (3) proof of a valid nationally or regionally recognized certification or other certification approved by the Board; ~~and~~ OR
- (4) documentation of satisfactory completion of any other qualifications established by the Board.

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