Alternative Pathways Task Force Meeting - #8 Meeting Note

Date: Wednesday, September 16, 2026
Time: 7:30PM
Topic: Alternative Pathways – Performance Based Evaluation

Attendance

Members Present

Jimmy Beldon
Marylourdes Gayles
Jacob Leffler, SBSLI Chair (Taskforce Lead)
Jadalynn Orr
Jerry Seremeth
Sarah Yates
Thomas Horejes
James Skjeveland, SBSLI Member
Caitlin Comstock
Joshua Finkle

GODDBHH Staff Support

Usherla DeBerry
Tanéa Brown

Members Absent

Tisha Bera
April Jackson-Woodard

Purpose

The meeting focused on reviewing the Task Force's study materials and determining next steps regarding:

Alternative pathway testing options;
Barriers preventing interpreters from obtaining licensure/certification;
Town hall planning;

Interpreter survey development; and
Research into alternative licensing/testing models used by other states.

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting began at approximately 7:37 PM, called to order by Jacob. Participants introduced themselves and identified their professional or organizational backgrounds.

Participants included representatives of the State Board, certified Deaf interpreters, interpreting professionals, interpreter educators, and other Task Force members.

The Task Force reviewed the purpose of the meeting and the study materials that had been distributed in advance.

2. Review of Previous Discussions and Alternative Pathway Options

Jimmy requested clarification regarding the background of the Task Force's work and the approximately 18 pages of study materials that had been distributed.

The group reviewed prior discussions regarding potential alternative qualifications, including:

EIPA 4.0 for K–12 educational settings;
BEI Basic for general interpreting;
A potential Maryland-developed testing/evaluation process;
Portfolio or practical assessments; and
Other alternative pathways to licensure.

It was clarified that the AP TF had previously discussed the possibility of recommending EIPA 4.0 and BEI Basic as options appropriate to particular settings.

3. Clarification Regarding State-Administered Testing

A significant portion of the meeting focused on whether GODDBHH would administer a Maryland-developed examination.

The discussion clarified that Maryland law provides the State Board with authority to establish alternative qualifications or evaluations as part of the licensing criteria. This could potentially include:

An examination;
Practical evaluation;

Portfolio assessment; or
Another qualification standard established by the Board.

However, if the Board establishes a state-administered testing system, GODDBHH would need sufficient staffing and resources to support the administrative operation of the examination.

An alternative would be for the Board to approve an external certification or contract with an outside organization to administer testing.

Funding

The AP TF discussed the need for funding if Maryland were to establish or administer a testing system.

It was clarified that:

Funding would need to be addressed through the State budget process;
The Board would need to make a recommendation/request;
Legislative approval would be required as part of the budget process; and
There is currently **no guarantee that funding would be approved**.

The group agreed that funding must be considered as part of the overall feasibility analysis.

4. Discussion of Provisional/Temporary Licensure

The AP TF discussed whether provisional or temporary licensure could serve as an additional option.

The discussion referenced an existing temporary licensing framework that allows an interpreter to receive a temporary license for a defined period while working toward full qualification.

The discussion included:

Passing a written/ethics examination;
A three-year temporary period;
Potential renewal for an additional two years;
CEU requirements for renewal; and
Restrictions on the types of assignments a temporarily licensed interpreter may accept.

It was noted that certain assignments may require the temporary interpreter to work with another licensed interpreter.

The AP TF did **not adopt a new provisional licensing recommendation** during the meeting. The discussion was exploratory and intended to identify possible options.

5. Question of Whether Maryland Needs Its Own Examination

The Task Force had an extensive discussion regarding whether Maryland should create its own examination if RID and BEI examinations already exist.

Several questions were raised:

What specific problem would a Maryland examination solve?
What barriers prevent interpreters from taking RID or BEI examinations?
Would a Maryland examination address those barriers?
What would distinguish a Maryland examination from RID or BEI?
Could Maryland maintain an equivalent professional standard?
What would the examination cost?
What resources would be required to develop and maintain the examination?

There was concern that a Maryland examination should not be viewed as an easier alternative to existing certification examinations.

The AP TF emphasized that any Maryland examination should maintain an appropriate professional standard and should not reduce expectations for interpreter qualifications.

6. Testing Locations and Accessibility

The AP TF discussed geographic access as a potential barrier.

Participants noted that:

RID testing availability may be limited;
GODDBHH has put in a request to become a host site in state of Maryland for BEI and currently on the waitlist;
Travel can involve transportation, hotel, meals, lost work time, and other expenses;
Scholarships may cover examination fees but may not cover travel-related costs; and
A Maryland-based option could potentially reduce travel burdens.

The possibility of providing multiple testing locations throughout Maryland was discussed, including geographic regions such as Western Maryland, Southern Maryland, Baltimore, and Eastern Maryland.

GODDBHH is also considering adding on the financial hardship application to include a line for 'other' for any challenges an interpreter faces towards completing their certification.

Participants also discussed whether remote/virtual testing could reduce barriers where appropriate.

7. Need to Identify Actual Barriers

A major theme of the meeting was the need to determine why interpreters are not becoming certified/licensed before deciding what alternative pathway should be established.

Potential barriers discussed included:

Examination cost;
Travel and transportation;
Location of testing;
Time away from work;
Family responsibilities;
Education/degree requirements;
Lack of preparation;
Lack of mentorship;
Lack of information about licensing requirements;
Concerns regarding certification organizations;
Individual decisions not to pursue certification; and
Limited interpreting work or plans for retirement.

The AP TF Task Force agreed that additional information (lending towards feasibility study) is needed to determine which barriers are most significant in Maryland.

8. Mentorship Discussion

The AP TF discussed mentorship as a potential way to support interpreters who are working toward certification.

Participants suggested that mentorship could:

Help interpreters understand certification requirements;
Help interpreters prepare for examinations;
Provide professional guidance;
Help newer interpreters develop their skills;
Provide ongoing feedback; and

Encourage interpreters who may be hesitant to pursue certification.

The concept of regular observation, feedback, and professional development was also discussed.

There was general support for further exploring mentorship as part of the broader solution to certification barriers.

9. Discussion of a Grandfather Clause

The AP TF discussed whether individuals with extensive interpreting experience, particularly individuals approaching retirement, should receive some form of grandfathering.

Discussions Raised in Support

Identified concerns that some experienced interpreters:

Have worked for many years;
May work only part-time;
May be close to retirement;
May not believe the financial cost of certification is worthwhile; and
May have established relationships with Deaf consumers.

A limited grandfather provision was suggested as something that could be considered.

Concerns About Grandfathering

Other members expressed concerns that grandfathering could undermine the goal of establishing consistent professional standards.

Concerns included:

Protecting Deaf and Hard of Hearing consumers;
Ensuring interpreters meet appropriate qualification standards;
Avoiding continuation of unqualified interpreting practices; and
Maintaining consistency with other licensed professions.

The Task Force did not reach a final decision regarding a grandfather clause. The issue remains for further consideration.

10. Consumer Protection and Deaf Community Input

The AP TF discussed the purpose of interpreter licensure and the importance of protecting Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing consumers.

Participants emphasized that the licensing process should:

Protect consumers;
Ensure interpreters are appropriately qualified;
Establish professional standards;
Provide a grievance/complaint process; and
Help address situations in which interpreters may be assigned to work beyond their qualifications.

The group also discussed the role of interpreting agencies in ensuring that interpreters are appropriately matched to assignments.

The AP TF agreed that Deaf and DeafBlind community perspectives are important to the study, but also recognized that consumer feedback should be considered alongside professional standards and the statutory purpose of licensure.

11. Town Hall Proposal

The AP TF discussed conducting a town hall with members of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community.

The purpose would be to gather direct community input regarding:

Interpreter qualifications;
Consumer experiences;
Expectations for licensed interpreters;
Concerns regarding the current system;
Accessibility;
Barriers; and
What the community expects from an alternative pathway.

Participants discussed making the town hall accessible and creating smaller discussion groups or breakout rooms to encourage participation.

12. Regional Town Hall Approach

The AP TF discussed whether one statewide town hall would adequately capture the experiences of Maryland's diverse communities.

Possible approaches included:

Multiple regional town halls;
Separate Zoom sessions by region;
Western Maryland;
Eastern Maryland;
Southern Maryland;
Baltimore;
Northern Maryland; and
Other geographic areas as appropriate.

The purpose would be to make participation more comfortable and accessible and to ensure that feedback is not concentrated in only one geographic area.

13. Proposed Town Hall Format

Jimmy proposed that GODDBHH help prepare an introductory presentation or video explaining:

Maryland interpreter licensing;
Professional standards;
The grievance/complaint process;
The purpose of the Task Force;
What information the Task Force is seeking; and
Why the community's input is important.

After the introductory information, participants could be divided into smaller breakout groups.

The proposed format would include:

Brief informational presentation;
A few introductory questions;
Breakout groups;
Facilitated discussion;
Collection of feedback; and
Full-group reconvening.

The group discussed having AP TF members or Board representatives facilitate or moderate the breakout groups.

14. Interpreter Survey

The AP TF agreed that an interpreter survey would be useful for identifying barriers that may not be openly discussed in a group setting.

Participants expressed concern that interpreters might not feel comfortable publicly discussing:

Financial difficulties;
Concerns about certification organizations;
Personal circumstances;
Employment situations;
Examination experiences; or
Reasons for not pursuing certification.

For that reason, an anonymous/confidential survey was viewed as a potentially effective way to obtain candid information.

A shorter survey was suggested, potentially consisting of approximately eight questions with check-box responses and opportunities for additional comments.

Survey Purpose

The survey will focus primarily on:

> *Why interpreters are not taking or completing certification examinations and what barriers they are experiencing.*

Potential barriers include cost, transportation, education, preparation, time, location, and other factors identified by respondents.

15. Distinction Between Town Hall and Survey

The Task Force clarified that the two activities have different purposes:

Interpreter Survey

Focused on interpreters and the barriers they experience in obtaining certification/licensure.

Deaf/DeafBlind/Hard of Hearing Town Hall

Focused on consumers/community members and their perspectives regarding interpreter qualifications, licensing, access, and consumer protection.

The Task Force agreed that both sources of information could help inform the overall study.

16. Research on Other States

The Task Force discussed research into other states that have:

State-specific interpreter examinations;
Licensing systems;
Screening systems;
Alternative pathways;
Registries;
Qualification systems; or
State-administered testing.

Participants noted that some states have testing systems separate from alternative pathways, while others use state screening or qualification systems.

The Task Force emphasized that further research is necessary to understand:

Why each state established its system;
What qualifications are required;
Whether the system is an alternative to national certification;
Whether testing is administered by the state or an outside organization;
How the system is funded;
How complaints/grievances are handled;
How the system protects consumers; and
Whether the standard is comparable to existing national certification systems.

Concerns were raised that Maryland should not adopt a state testing model without first examining its quality and standards.

17. Three Task Force Subgroups Established

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Task Force established **three areas of work**.

Subgroup 1 – Town Hall

Lead: Jimmy

Responsibilities include:

Develop the town hall concept;
Consider regional locations/Zoom sessions;
Develop potential dates;
Develop the proposed format;

Consider introductory information/video;
Develop questions and discussion topics; and
Report progress to the full Task Force.

Subgroup 2 – Interpreter Survey

Lead: Sarah

Members identified to assist include:

Sarah;
Caitlin;
Jadalynn;
Jimmy; and
Other AP TF members who wish to participate.

The group will develop an anonymous/confidential survey focused on interpreter certification barriers.

Subgroup 3 – State Research

Lead: Caitlin

Sarah indicated that she would assist with the research.

The subgroup will continue reviewing:

State licensing models;
Alternative pathways;
State testing;
Screening systems;
Qualification standards;
Reasons states developed their systems; and
Relevant costs and procedures.

The group was not required to complete the research before the next meeting but will provide a progress update.

18. Next Meeting

The AP TF agreed to reconvene in approximately **two weeks, on September 30, 2026**.

The next meeting will include:

Review of the draft interpreter survey;
Discussion of proposed survey questions and any missing information;
Town hall planning update, including possible dates and format;
Progress report from the state research subgroup; and
Further discussion of the overall study and recommendations.

The Task Force members were also reminded of the upcoming State Board meeting scheduled for the following Wednesday at 7:30 PM.

Closing

Jacob concluded the meeting with confirmation of the three subgroup assignments and plans to reconvene on **September 30, 2026**. He encouraged the members to work within their respective subgroups before the next meeting and bring their progress and recommendations back to the full AP TF.

Adjournment - 9:30PM