Alternative Pathways Task Force Meeting - #9 Meeting Notes

Date: Wednesday, September 30, 2026
Time: 7:30PM
Topic: Reports and discussions by three subgroups - Town Halls, Survey and State Research

Attendance

Members Present

Jimmy Beldon
Joshua Finkle
Marylourdes Gayles
Thomas Horejes
Jadalynn Orr
Jerry Seremeth

GODDBHH Staff Support

Usherla DeBerry - facilitated meeting
Diamon Halliburton

Members Absent

Tisha Bera
Caitlin Comstock
April Jackson-Woodard
Jacob Leffler, SBSLI Chair (Taskforce Lead)
James Skjeveland, SBSLI Member
Sarah Yates

Purpose

The meeting focused on reports and discussions from three subgroups.

Discussion Summary

1. Welcome and Opening

Usherla DeBerry opened the meeting and welcomed participants. She explained that the meeting would focus on reports and discussions from three areas:

Town Hall Planning
Interpreter Survey
State Research on Alternative Pathways

The meeting also included discussion regarding timelines, data collection, potential town hall formats, and state-level certification/testing options.

Everyone who attended introduced themselves, including a physical description, including representatives from interpreting agencies, interpreter education programs, certified interpreters, and community organizations.

2. Town Hall Planning Report

Jimmy reported on discussions among the town hall subgroup, which included Jimmy, Jerri, and Jacob. The group had begun developing a framework for the town halls, although no additional volunteers had joined the subgroup at that point. They are seeking logistical support from GODDBHH, which includes support for ideal dates, times, and locations.

Proposed Town Hall Focus

The subgroup discussed moving away from simply asking whether individuals had passed certification examinations and instead focusing on:

The personal and professional impact of certification barriers;
Consumer rights and protections;
Experiences with the certification process;
Barriers experienced by the DDBHH;
Available resources;
Information that could help inform the Task Force's recommendations if shared; and
The goal is to provide a safe space for the DDBHH.

Discussed potentially organizing DDBHH Marylanders to ensure that different experiences are represented. Groups discussed included:

Deaf seniors;
Maryland Community Center for the Deaf (MCCD);
Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD);
DC Area Black Deaf Advocates (DCABDA);
Any DDBHH diversity-focused groups;

DeafBlind individuals;
Deaf interpreters; and
Potentially an additional group if needed.

The group discussed the importance of creating a Deaf-centered space where participants could communicate openly and comfortably. There was concern that making every town hall a public meeting or recording the sessions could affect participants' willingness to share openly. Seeking safe space.

Clarification Regarding Deaf, DeafBlind, and Interpreter Groups

The Task Force clarified that the proposed town halls are intended to gather information from Deaf and DeafBlind individuals, while the interpreter survey is intended to gather information from interpreters.

The possibility of including current interpreter students or other interpreter populations in a town hall was also discussed. Participants distinguished between:

Current interpreter students who are progressing through an educational program;
Individuals who left an interpreter education program;
Individuals who completed a program but did not become certified;
Individuals who are working but remain uncertified; and
Individuals who entered another field rather than pursuing interpreting.

The group expressed interest in understanding why individuals do not complete the certification pathway or leave the profession.

3. Interpreter Survey Report

Jadaylnn reported that Sarah has worked hard on this and shared it internally. She shared great appreciation for Sarah’s work and proposed questionnaires for certified and uncertified interpreters. The goal is to present the DRAFT survey at the next AP TF meeting.

The survey is intended primarily to collect information from interpreters who have not obtained certification, with questions designed to identify barriers and experiences with the certification process.

Proposed Survey Topics

The questionnaire may address:

Certification status;

Certification history;
Whether the individual has taken the NIC or other examinations;
Written examination attempts;
Performance examination attempts;
Number of attempts;
Reasons for unsuccessful attempts;
Cost of testing;
Access to testing;
Study and preparation resources;
Mentorship;
Anxiety related to testing;
Accessibility for individuals with disabilities;
Work and family responsibilities;
Multiple unsuccessful attempts;
CEU requirements; (possible reasons why discouraged on pursuing CEUs)
Concerns about certification organizations;
Interest in alternative pathways;
Distance to testing locations;
Video submission options;
Work history;
Educational background;
Interpreting experience;
EIPA experience; and
Optional demographic/background information.

The survey would primarily use multiple-choice questions, with an opportunity for respondents to provide additional comments.

Survey Population

Discussion emphasized the importance of identifying the appropriate population for the survey. Participants discussed including people who:

Are not currently certified;
Have left interpreter education programs;
Did not complete an interpreter education program;
Did not enter the interpreting profession after completing education; or
Have encountered barriers to certification.

The purpose is to understand why individuals have not become certified, rather than simply collecting information from people who are already successfully progressing through certification.

4. Discussion of RID Alternative Pathway

The group discussed the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) alternative pathway and the role of educational credits and work experience.

Participants discussed the use of college credits, work experience, CEUs, and potentially other forms of experience or qualifications within an alternative pathway.

There was discussion about the potential difficulty of meeting the educational-credit requirements and how those requirements may affect individuals with substantial interpreting experience but without the required college credits.

Participants also discussed community college programs and whether educational institutions could help students accumulate the credits necessary to meet alternative pathway requirements.

One participant raised the possibility of exploring workforce-development opportunities, including apprenticeships and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding, to support interpreter education, experience, and certification.

5. State Research Report

Usherla read a summary from Caitlin's email to the group. The Task Force received a report on research regarding states that administer their own interpreter testing or have state licensure/registration systems that function independently or in conjunction with national certification from Caitlin.

The research identified:

> **13 states** with their own testing/administrative processes;
> **25 states** identified as having licensure or a functionally equivalent registry; and
> **Eight states** among the researched states that administer testing systems aligned with RID certification.

The eight states discussed were:

> Arkansas
> Kansas
> Michigan
> Mississippi
> Missouri
> Nebraska
> New Hampshire

Wisconsin

State Testing Models Discussed

The presentation described several approaches:

Michigan, Wisconsin, and Missouri

Previously had state-developed testing systems.
Later adopted the Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI).
Made adjustments to their systems based on state needs.

Arkansas, Kansas, and Nebraska

Use qualification/assessment systems associated with the Mid-America Quality Assurance Screening Test (QAST).
Have made state-specific modifications.

Kansas

Developed significant modifications to create a state-specific approach.

Mississippi and New Hampshire

Developed systems that are more independent from the other models discussed.

Reasons for State-Based Systems

The discussion identified several reasons states have developed their own assessment or qualification systems, including:

Establishing levels appropriate to different interpreting assignments;
Addressing state-specific legal or regulatory requirements;
Assessing interpreter qualifications;
Protecting Deaf consumers from potential harm;
Addressing interpreter workforce shortages; and
Avoiding reliance on a single national certification pathway.

6. Potential Use of BEI in Maryland

The research discussion included a potential model in which Maryland could lease or otherwise utilize the BEI examination as part of an alternative pathway.

Potential benefits discussed included the possibility of Maryland establishing requirements related to:

Examination costs;
Testing requirements;
Virtual or in-person testing options;
CEUs;
Maintenance requirements; and
Credentialing parameters.

The discussion also noted that BEI has multiple levels and does not require a bachelor's degree in the same manner as some other certification pathways.

Concerns Raised

The Task Force did not reach consensus to recommend leasing BEI.

Jimmy specifically expressed concern about moving directly to a BEI recommendation before identifying the actual barriers experienced by Maryland interpreters. He stated that the Task Force should first determine whether RID testing itself is the primary barrier.

Additional concerns included:

The complexity of the BEI system;
Whether BEI appropriately addresses Deaf interpreter certification, DI tailors towards CASLI;
The fact that BEI's primary examination discussed applies to hearing interpreters;
The need to understand the actual barriers before selecting a solution; and
The need to maintain appropriate standards for interpreter qualifications.

It was clarified during the discussion that the BEI examination discussed does not serve as a Deaf Interpreter certification examination.

7. Importance of Identifying Actual Barriers

A significant point of discussion was that the Task Force should avoid assuming that RID testing is the primary barrier without sufficient data.

Participants emphasized the need to:

Gather information directly from interpreters;
Identify the actual barriers;
Analyze the information collected;

Consider the experiences of Deaf and DeafBlind consumers; and
Use the resulting information to develop recommendations.

The survey and town hall processes were therefore identified as important sources of information before making a final recommendation regarding an alternative pathway.

8. Timeline and Next Steps

Participants requested clarification regarding the overall timeline, implementation schedule, and expected completion date for the Task Force's work.

It was discussed that meetings would continue to occur every two weeks.

The next meeting is expected to continue discussion of:

Town hall planning;
Survey development;
State research;
Timeline and implementation;
GODDBHH support;
Potential town hall dates and locations; and
Additional analysis and recommendations.

The group also discussed the need to determine how much support GODDBHH can provide for the town halls and how responsibilities should be divided among Task Force members.

9. Quorum and Formal Decisions

The discussion noted that the group did not believe quorum was present to make formal decisions regarding next steps to vote or focus on discussions.

Accordingly, the discussion regarding the town hall framework, survey, state research, and potential BEI recommendation was documented for follow-up rather than adopted as a formal resolution.

The meeting emphasized that additional information and clarification regarding the timeline are needed before formal decisions are made.

Closing

Usherla thanked participants for their contributions and indicated that additional analysis and recommendations would be reviewed before the next meeting. Participants expressed appreciation to GODDBHH and its staff for the support provided behind the scenes.

The meeting was then adjourned at 8:28PM EST.