Taskforce Alternative Pathways (AP) – #11 Meeting Notes

Date: November 04, 2026
Time: 7:30 PM – 8:44 PM
Zoom Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/mnYgMnWlT9mJb9VudFMi3Q
Meeting ID: 871 4679 4724

Date: Wednesday, November 4, 2026
Format: Virtual meeting
Meeting lead: Jacob Leffler
Purpose: Review progress on the interpreter survey, plan Deaf and DeafBlind community town halls, and continue discussion of alternative pathways and provisional licensure.

1. Introductions

Participants introduced themselves and shared their professional roles and perspectives, including representation from:

- Maryland Sign Language Interpreting Licensure Board
- Certified sign language interpreters
- Interpreting agencies
- Frederick Community College
- Maryland Governor's Office of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing (GODDBHH)

Usherla DeBerry participated on behalf of GODDBHH.

2. Workgroup updates

The meeting focused on three areas: the interpreter survey, community town halls, and state research.

State research update

Caitlin reported that there was no new update available on the state research report.

Interpreter survey update

The Task Force reviewed Sarah's revised survey, which incorporated feedback from the previous meeting. The updated survey includes resources and options available to interpreters pursuing certification, including information from states, community colleges, and RID.

The following items were discussed:

- Finalize the survey and review the revisions.
- Develop a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey.
- Select a survey platform that can help reduce duplicate responses.
- Identify community partners and distribution channels.
- Establish a survey distribution date and response deadline.
- Encourage non-certified interpreters to participate.

Survey platform

Usherla explained that GODDBHH has used Smartsheet for behavioral health-related work and Google Forms for other surveys. Both platforms can be configured to limit repeat submissions through settings that require email identification.

The Task Force agreed to move forward with Google Forms.

GODDBHH will support the survey platform process. The group will have an opportunity to review the survey before it is distributed.

Cover letter and distribution

Jacob agreed to prepare the cover letter for the survey and circulate it to the group for review.

The group discussed distributing the survey as soon as it is ready rather than waiting until after Thanksgiving, when holiday activities may affect participation.

Potential distribution channels include:

- Interpreter email lists and professional networks.
- Social media and interpreter Facebook groups.
- Community colleges and interpreter education programs.
- Current students, graduates, alumni, and individuals who withdrew from interpreter training programs.

Jerri confirmed that Frederick Community College has contact lists for both graduates and individuals who withdrew from the program. These groups may provide useful information about barriers to completing interpreter education and obtaining certification.

Survey response deadline

The group agreed to allow respondents until one week after New Year's Day 2027 to complete the survey. The exact calendar date should be confirmed in the final survey and cover letter.

The survey will ask whether respondents have passed the written examination and performance examination. The information will help the Task Force better understand certification experiences and barriers.

3. Deaf and DeafBlind community town halls

The Task Force discussed separate engagement opportunities for the Deaf community and the DeafBlind community.

A. Deaf community town hall

The group agreed that November 18 would be too soon to adequately prepare and publicize the town hall.

Agreed date
Wednesday, December 9, 2026

7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. (as discussed during the meeting)

The purpose of the town hall is to hear directly from the Deaf community about the impact of interpreter licensure and alternative pathways.

The discussion emphasized that the town hall should:

- Be a Deaf-centered space.
- Explain the purpose and history of interpreter licensure and the Task Force.
- Discuss how licensure and alternative pathways may affect the Deaf community.
- Remain neutral rather than advocating for or against licensure.
- Gather community perspectives, experiences, and recommendations.

Registration and regional discussions

The registration process will include a question asking participants which Maryland county they live in. This information will help organizers determine whether to divide participants into regional breakout groups.

Potential regions discussed included Western Maryland, Southern Maryland, and Eastern Maryland.

The proposed format includes approximately 30 minutes for small-group discussion, followed by a return to the main session for brief reports from each group.

Town hall planning committee

Jacob, Jerri, Jimmy, and April were identified in the discussion as part of the planning process. Thomas agreed to participate and assist with planning.

The committee will work on:

- Town hall logistics and format.
- Discussion questions.
- A historical overview of the licensure process, relevant legislation, and the Task Force's purpose.
- A method for documenting community feedback.

- A process for summarizing the information collected.

Caitlin emphasized the importance of gathering community input in a way that supports Deaf community buy-in for any proposed alternative pathway.

Thomas recommended using open-ended questions to avoid leading participants toward a particular position.

Advertising and ASL video outreach

GODDBHH agreed to develop advertising materials for the town hall and share a draft with the planning group for review before final distribution.

The group discussed creating approximately three promotional videos. Participants recommended including familiar faces from GODDBHH to help build awareness and confidence within the community.

Usherla stated that GODDBHH already has a script and recording that can be shared with the group. The Task Force will also prepare a script for its own promotional signing.

B. DeafBlind community town hall

The group discussed holding a separate DeafBlind community town hall.

Proposed date
Saturday, December 5, 2026

The discussion emphasized allowing DeafBlind community members to help determine the meeting location and time to encourage participation and ensure accessibility.

Usherla shared that the DeafBlind organization had been contacted and was waiting for the organizers to identify a preferred date and location.

The group discussed:

- Holding the meeting after 10:00 a.m. and before 5:00 p.m.
- Considering transportation accessibility, including public transportation and mobility needs.
- Exploring locations that are convenient for DeafBlind participants.
- Giving the DeafBlind organization an opportunity to recommend the location.

Usherla agreed to share the community's feedback with the organization first and then communicate its decision to the Task Force.

DeafBlind interpreting support

Jacob asked whether GODDBHH would coordinate interpreting services for the DeafBlind town hall.

Usherla confirmed that GODDBHH would follow up with Tam regarding available interpreting support.

4. Discussion: Provisional licensure and alternative pathways

Thomas raised questions about how Maryland's provisional licensure process could provide more meaningful support for emerging interpreters.

Ideas discussed included:

- Mentorship and supervised interpreting opportunities.
- Guidance and counseling for interpreters pursuing certification.
- Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and assistance identifying appropriate professional development.
- Partnerships with community colleges, including Frederick Community College and other institutions.
- Grant funding or other financial assistance to support mentorship and certification.
- Exploring whether the provisional license structure could be expanded to provide more intentional support.

Thomas referenced an interpreting agency model that provides approximately 80 hours of supervised interpreting and mentorship as an example of a potential support structure.

Jacob clarified that the Task Force needs to first collect information about why interpreters are not obtaining certification or are experiencing repeated examination failures. The group should use evidence rather than assumptions when determining what resources or programs may be needed.

The survey already includes questions asking respondents whether they have passed the written and performance examinations.

Clarification on provisional licensure and timelines

Jacob explained that:

- Provisional licensure requires passing the ethics written examination.
- The general community licensure implementation date was postponed to January 1, 2028.
- Licensure for educational settings is scheduled for July 2028.
- The Board is working on developing regulations that will address the requirements.

The group also revisited previous discussions regarding interpreters who have an EPI score of 4.0 or BEI Basic. Jacob stated that the Task Force had previously discussed allowing these interpreters to obtain an alternative pathway license, subject to restrictions and limitations.

The group acknowledged that this earlier discussion had taken place and that the current focus was on exploring community-wide licensure and alternative pathways.

Grant funding clarification

Usherla explained that her understanding was that the EARN grant funding discussed could support RID testing fees. She agreed to follow up to determine whether BEI testing is also eligible.

5. Decisions and agreements

Topic	Agreement or outcome
Survey platform	Proceed with Google Forms.
Survey cover letter	Jacob agreed to prepare a draft for group review.
Survey distribution	Distribute as soon as the survey and cover letter are ready.
Survey deadline	One week after New Year's Day 2027; exact date to be confirmed.
Survey outreach	Include interpreter networks, colleges, alumni, graduates, and individuals who withdrew from programs.
Deaf community town hall	December 9, 2026, from 7:30–9:30 p.m.
DeafBlind community town hall	December 5, 2026, proposed; location and time to be determined with community input.
Town hall advertising	GODDBHH will develop promotional materials and share drafts for review.
Promotional videos	Develop approximately three videos, including familiar GODDBHH representation.

Provisional licensure	Continue discussion and use survey data to identify needed supports.
Next Task Force meeting	November 18, 2026.

6. Action items

Responsible person/group	Follow-up action
Jacob	Prepare the survey cover letter and circulate it for review.
GODDBHH / Usherla	Support development of the Google Forms survey and coordinate review with the Task Force.
Sarah	Continue supporting survey revisions and incorporate feedback.
Jacob	Coordinate survey distribution through email, social media, interpreter groups, and professional networks.
Jerri	Explore distribution to current students, graduates, alumni, and individuals who withdrew from interpreter education programs.
Task Force	Confirm the exact survey deadline and include it in the cover letter and survey.
Town hall planning group	Develop questions, format, logistics, and a method for documenting feedback.

GODDBHH / Usherla	Develop town hall advertising and share the draft for review.
GODDBHH / Usherla	Share the existing promotional script and recording with the Task Force.
Town hall planning group	Develop promotional signing videos.
Usherla	Follow up with the DeafBlind organization regarding its preferred date, time, and location.
Usherla	Follow up with Tam regarding interpreting support for the DeafBlind town hall.
Usherla	Confirm whether EARN grant funding can cover BEI testing fees in addition to RID testing fees.
Task Force	Continue examining provisional licensure, mentorship, and other supports using survey findings.

7. Next meeting

Wednesday, November 18, 2026

The group agreed to meet again in two weeks to continue planning and review progress toward the December community town halls.

The meeting adjourned.

Special thanks for waiting 25 minutes before the meeting started due to a task force member running behind schedule, unforeseen circumstances. We appreciate your patience.