

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

SA 14-15

HB5321

House	1684-1687	4
Senate	3456, 3474, 3480-3481	4
Human Services	1020, 1065-1107, 1172- <u>1195</u>	68
		76

H – 1186

**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2014**

**VOL.57
PART 6
1681 – 2023**

law/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

4
April 23, 2014

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, Madam. The Chamber will stand at ease as I put my pin on my lapel. Hopefully the rest of us will do the same. Thank you. Are there any other announcements or introductions? Seeing none, let's move to the calendar. Will the Clerk please call Calendar Number 208.

THE CLERK:

Yes, Mr. Speaker. On page 44, House Calendar 208, favorable report of the joint standing committee on education, substitute House Bill 5321, AN ACT CONCERNING INTERPRETER QUALIFICATIONS.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Abercrombie.

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83rd):

Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Good morning, Ma'am.

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83rd)

Mr. Speaker, I move for the acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The question is on acceptance of the joint

law/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

5
April 23, 2014

committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

Will you remark Ma'am?

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this was a bill that came out of human services and what it has to do with is interpreter services for students in the classroom. We heard a lot of testimony about not having enough interpreters and also the qualifications so what this does is put together a working group who will report back to the General Assembly on the -- before the 31st of December with some recommendations how we can get more qualified interpreters. I move adoption.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The question before the Chamber is adoption. Would you care to remark? Would you care to remark further on the bill? Representative Wood.

REP. WOOD (141st):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand in support of this bill and it was a very interesting public hearing on that day. I'll -- it was really one of the highlights for -- for me this session. It also -- what the working group is going to look at is strengthening and standardizing the qualifications of

law/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

6
April 23, 2014

interpreter training for the deaf and hard of hearing and bring Connecticut into alignment with emerging national standards. So I do stand in support of this and hope the Chamber will support it as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, Madam. Would you care to remark? Would you care to remark further on the bill before us? If not, staff and guests to the well of the House. Members take your seats. The machine will be opened.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll.

The House of Representatives is voting by roll. Will members please return to the Chamber immediately.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted? Will the members please check the board to make sure your vote is properly cast. If all the members have voted the machine will be locked and the Clerk will take a tally. Will the Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Mr. Speaker, on House Bill 5321.

law/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

7
April 23, 2014

Total Number Voting	136
Necessary for Passage	69
Those voting Yea	136
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	14

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The bill passes. Will the Clerk please call --
I'm sorry. Are there any announcements or
introductions? Representative Urban.

REP. URBAN (43rd):

Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Could my vote be recorded in
the affirmative on the last?

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The vote has been cast but the transcript will
record your intention to vote in the affirmative.

REP. URBAN (43rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, Madam. Are there any other
announcements or introductions? If not, we'll return
to the calendar. Will the Clerk please call --
Representative Hewett, for what reason do you rise,
Sir?

REP. HEWETT (39th):

**S - 679
CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2014**

**VETO
SESSION**

**VOL. 57
PART 11
3246 – 3508**

pat/gbr
SENATE

271
May 7, 2014

SENATOR LOONEY:

Calendar 456, House Bill 5440, move to place on the
Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Calendar 459, House Bill 5321, move to place on the
Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

And Calendar 461, House Bill 5140, move to place on
the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President. Moving to Calendar Page
16, Calendar 474, House Bill 5337, move to place on
the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir. Senator, is there also on Page 15
that you might have missed.

SENATOR LOONEY:

The matter on Page 15 we have already voted, Madam
President.

THE CHAIR:

pat/gbr
SENATE

289
May 7, 2014

Calendar 334, House Bill 5339.

Calendar 336, House Bill 5056.

On Page 7, Calendar 345, House Bill 5443.

On Page 9, Calendar 417, House Bill 5410.

On Page 10, Calendar 420, House Bill 5258.

Calendar 421, House Bill 5263.

Calendar 424, House Bill 5439.

On Page 11, Calendar 429, House Bill 5581.

On Page 12, Calendar 445, House Bill 5418.

Calendar 438, House Bill 5336.

On Page 13, Calendar 453, House Bill 5133.

Calendar 446, House Bill 5150.

Calendar 452, House Bill 5531.

On Page 14, Calendar 457, House Bill 5516.

Calendar 455, House Bill 5325.

Calendar 456, House Bill 5440.

Calendar 459, House Bill 5321.

Calendar 461, House Bill 5140.

On Page 15, Calendar 468, House Bill 5450.

Calendar 465, House Bill 5341.

On Page 16, Calendar 474, House Bill 5337.

Calendar 469, 5538.

Calendar 473, House Bill 5328.

On Page 17, Calendar 496, House Bill 5115.

pat/gbr
SENATE

295
May 7, 2014

SENATOR LOONEY:

If we might pause for just a moment to verify a couple of additional items.

Madam President, to verify an additional item, I believe it was placed on the Consent Calendar and Calendar Page 30, on Calendar Page 30, Calendar 592, Substitute for House Bill 5476.

THE CHAIR:

It is, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

It is on? Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Madam President. If the Clerk would now, finally, Agenda Number 4, Madam President, Agenda Number 4 one additional item ask for suspension to place up on Agenda Number 4 and that is, ask for suspension to place on the Consent Calendar an item from Agenda Number 4.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President, and that item is Substitute House Bill Number 5566 from Senate Agenda Number 4.

Thank you, Madam President. If the Clerk would now, if we might call for a vote on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk. Will you please call for a Roll Call Vote on the Consent Calendar. The machine will be opened.

THE CLERK:

An immediate Roll Call has been ordered in the Senate.

pat/gbr
SENATE

296
May 7, 2014

An immediate Roll Call on Consent Calendar Number 2 has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

If all members have voted, all members have voted, the machine will be closed. Mr. Clerk will you please call the tally.

THE CLERK:

Consent Calendar Number 2.

Total number voting	36
Necessary for adoption	19
Those voting Yea	36
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	0

THE CHAIR:

The Consent Calendar passes. Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President. Two additional items to take up before the, our final vote on the implementer. If we might stand for just, for just a moment.

The first item to mark Go is, Calendar, to remove from the Consent Calendar, Calendar Page 22, Calendar 536, House Bill 5546. If that item might be marked Go.

And one additional item, Madam President, and that was from Calendar, or rather from Agenda Number 4, ask for suspension to take it up for purposes of marking it Go, that is House Bill, Substitute for House Bill 5417. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**HUMAN
SERVICES
PART 3
934 – 1259**

2014

To: Human Services Committee overseeing Raised Bill No. 5321

From: Rachel Spillane, Certified Sign Language Interpreter, Designee of FSW
475 Clinton Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06105 rspillane@fswinc.org

RE: Interpreting services, monitoring, fees

FSW Interpreting Services is part of FSW non-profit agency that provides many support services to the population at large as well as targeted population i.e. the Deaf Community. FSW Interpreting services has been continuously running since 1995 and provides over 4,000 interpreting requests per year with a staff of 36 interpreters.

FSW supports Bill 5321 to help improve delivery of Interpreting services in CT.

In addition, FSW needs clarification of the following items of Bill 5321.

1) On page 3 (d) Commencing September 1, 2014, any business entity, within the state or through remote access, employing an interpreter who is providing services in CT shall ensure the interpreter is in compliance with the requirements of this section.

Many video remote companies headquarters and sites are outside of CT and employ interpreters that do not reside in CT. What methodology is going to be employed to track all of the video remote interpreting that occurs in CT in order to ensure that those interpreters are registered with the State and comply with Bill 5321?

In addition, many interpreting agencies that do not have their headquarters in CT also provide interpreting services in CT and again what methodology is going to be employed to track those interpreters?

In addition, who is going to physically go to school systems, businesses etc. and check the credentials of each person who may be functioning as an interpreter? Many school systems do not use the word interpreter, they may use labels such as communication assistant, aide and etc. So this would mean that someone would have to go to the various schools and observe staff who work with the deaf in order to get a clear idea what their true job function is with the deaf child.

The monitoring questions also brings in the question of cost of doing this kind of follow up in order to comply with Bill 5321. The concern is that the cost will be on the backs of interpreters who have to pay the licensing fee in order to work in CT. There are 252 registered interpreters on the registry list, so even if the fees were \$100 per person, \$25,200 is not sufficient to cover monitoring costs. I think the cost of this type of monitoring system should not be based only on collection of interpreter's fees, but it should also be assessed against Video Remote Companies and outside interpreter agencies whose corporate headquarters are outside of CT but yet reap the monetary benefit of doing business in CT. Otherwise the cost of monitoring could put the fees to an unreasonable rate for interpreters who reside and work in CT, since rate was not even stated in this bill.

Thank you for your time and attention to the above matter.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: But that's recent?

COMMISSIONER RODERICK BREMBY: The information of who we contract with.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: That's a recent change?

COMMISSIONER RODERICK BREMBY: Yes.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Okay. Thank you for that. And thank you for your clarification.

Are there any other questions from the members?

Seeing none, thank you again, Commissioner, as always. We appreciate you being here and your good work.

COMMISSIONER RODERICK BREMBY: Thank you very much.

As an agency, I think I can speak on behalf of the men and women who come to work every day seeking to serve Connecticut residents, we appreciate the opportunity.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Thank you.

Our next speaker is Commissioner Porter. Good afternoon.

COMMISSIONER AMY PORTER: Good afternoon, Senator Slossberg, and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Amy Porter and I am the Commissioner for the Department of Rehabilitation Services. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to share today our department's perspective on Raised Bill 5321, AN ACT CONCERNING INTERPRETER QUALIFICATIONS. Overall, our department supports the intent of this bill. It takes a lot of strides in aligning the state's

interpreter qualifications with those of our national certifying organizations. It also provides a long-term opportunity to increase the number of qualified interpreters available in specific types of settings such as medical, legal and education settings. It provides some clarity of expectations within those specific types of settings.

I know there are numerous individuals and organizations, many of whom are represented here today, who have been involved in the development of this proposal. They've spent a lot of time on their own time really working out the details, really doing research about what other states are doing and I appreciate their efforts to continuously improve our interpreting services structure. On a more detailed level, we wanted to share some considerations about costs and time lines associated with this bill. Before addressing the specific sections, one overarching suggestion relates to the global nature of the term "interpreting." We talk about this as an interpreting qualification bill and it might be helpful to specify upfront that the interpreting services described involve only those interpreting services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

So let me talk about some of the details. In the definition section, overall the definitions look fine. We have just one primary --

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: I'm just going to stop you for a second and ask you just to slow down just a little bit so that we can all keep up.

COMMISSIONER AMY PORTER: Sure.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER AMY PORTER: So in the definition section, we had one concern about the definition of medical setting. The language there is fairly vague and we're concerned that it might apply to more settings than the group actually intended it to. For instance, we have vocational rehabilitation counselors in our agency and they work with individuals with disabilities on developing employment plans for individuals to go to work. In the course of doing that, they have discussions about health issues and disability issues and so there is some concern that even a setting like that could be construed as a medical setting which we don't believe was the intent of this language change. Next, the statute describes the need for all interpreters to register annually with our department and this includes interpreters who are working in Connecticut through agencies that are operated from states outside of Connecticut, like individuals who are using -- who interpreting through video relay service. Our department has some concerns about how we'll be able to identify these interpreters, how we'll be able to enforce that requirement.

Section 1(c) adds the collection of a registration fee beginning later this year and we believe that there will be a cost associated with this requirement given that additional staffing would be necessary to establish a fee schedule, collect fees, assess penalties. It's unclear how the fee will be assessed for interpreters who are state of Connecticut employees. So this same section also requires the creation, printing, and dissemination of brochures and the provision of related education and training. The proposal contemplates that these costs will be covered by the fees collected, but there is no consideration for start-up costs or estimates

of the level of fees that would be required to meet these expectations.

Also, Section 1(e) and (f) adds training requirements for work in some of those specific settings that I mentioned earlier, specifically in legal and medical settings, and we clearly understand the intent here, but believe that there are also some considerations. In terms of cost, it's unclear how the training costs would be paid for interpreters who are state of Connecticut employees currently. Also, if implemented, we believe that we need to consider a time frame for implementation that doesn't adversely impact service delivery. If we were to make these requirements effective immediately, the pool of interpreters qualified to work in these settings could decrease and result in fewer interpreters being available for specific assignments in legal and medical settings. And these -- this pool of interpreters is already limited because we only have certain people who can work in legal and medical settings currently as an additional piece. So we're afraid it's going to actually limit it in the short term, although long term, we think it has some great benefits.

Section 2 is a new section that requires our department to appoint -- to appoint an interpreting standards and monitoring board. We believe this would create additional costs for our department in terms of coordinating meetings, completing and posting meeting agendas and minutes, working with other agencies to develop an appropriate fee schedule, and as mentioned previously, the work around assessing penalties, collecting fees, collecting penalties. Additionally, we're not clear whether the board would be made up of volunteers or whether they would be a paid board and we would need information on

associated costs either way that might be incurred such as travel, interpreting services and other disability-related accommodations. Given that there are no funds allocated for this activity, we oppose the inclusion of this component in the bill at this point.

Again, I would like to thank the committee for inviting me to testify today. We overall support the intent of the bill. It's just the time -- time and cost considerations that we'd like to look at and our department looks forward to working with you on a realistic implementation timeline for the provisions of this bill that cost neutral.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Thank you, Commissioner, for your testimony and for being here today. You raise some very interesting questions. I'm hopeful that some of the speakers who will come up will address some of them as we go along.

Are there questions from the committee members?

Seeing none, okay, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER AMY PORTER: Great. Thank you.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Okay. And we have one more speaker under the public official section that's Jim McGaughey from OPA.

Good afternoon.

JAMES MCGUAGHEY: Good afternoon, Senator Slossberg, members of the committee. For the record, my name is Jim McGaughey, director of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities. And I'm here to speak in support of the bill that Commissioner Porter just talked about, Raised Bill 5321, AN ACT CONCERNING INTERPRETER QUALIFICATIONS. I have

submitted written testimony so I'm not going to read it. I'll just summarize. Our office has been involved for a number of years representing individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing in situations where their rights to effective communication have not been respected because interpreters have not sometimes been providers. Sometimes there is no substitute for a qualified interpreter, particularly when you're dealing with a situation that involves a medical decision or medical procedures or some police activity or some legal -- legal proceedings.

And I think it's just as important as it is to have interpreters, they must be qualified. So much hinges on whether or not the concepts are being interpreting actually two very distinct languages, English and ASL, or in some cases, it's not ASL, it's something else. It's a sign English or whatever. But that's -- that's the -- I've been impressed over the years by just how artful qualified interpreters are and how much they need to know about the settings in which they're -- the interpreting is occurring, the courtroom setting or the hospital. They have to be familiar with the jargon there and they have ethical responsibilities to the person that they interpreting for so that if they understand -- if they -- if the tech that they're interpreting, they have to call it off and basically call in the (inaudible) and hopefully identify some other way of effectively communicating with that individual.

So the path the certifying or to establishing qualifications for interpreters has been sort of a long and torturous one that's involved a lot of discussions between civil rights groups, deaf rights groups and interpreter organizations. It's occurred at the national level. They've come up with a unified way of

doing it. Now, a lot of what this bill is about is just adopting that and making that the rule here in Connecticut. And I'm -- my written testimony refers to a specific component of this that I'm especially concerned about, which is the interpreting that's happening for deaf children in schools. I think that's often been neglected and interpreters for those children have sometimes not been well-qualified at all. They're not good role models necessarily for the kids so a lot -- and I think that's contributed to sort of a tyranny of low expectations and low achievement for a lot of those kids.

So that's -- that's the reason I think it's important. I think having the board that is also in Section 2 of this bill is really a step forward and it will ultimately institutionalize the kind of the attention and focus that is required to make sure that we maintain standards and that we, in fact, encourage people to become engaged in this professionally. So that's pretty much what I had to say. I will be happy to answer any questions if there are any.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Thank you very much for your testimony and for your explanation and for your advocacy. I think it's very important. So are there questions?

Yes, Representative Butler.

REP. BUTLER: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I had a question about the interpreters for the children that you said you had concerns with that particular area. What specifically do you have a problem with, the quality or the amount that's available or what area do you think is lacking?

JAMES MCGUAGHEY: Well, I think in some cases -- first of all, there are a lot of different approaches to educating children who are deaf and hard of hearing and nobody, least of all me, is going to dictate the particular approach for a particular child. That is supposed to be addressed now as part of an individual education plan, a decision is made as to whether -- I mean, a lot of kids are actually learning in different environments, but many children who are deaf now are going to school in their neighborhood schools along with their sisters and brothers and neighbors and there is a potential for them to be isolated in that environment because they are the only child who is deaf or hard of hearing in that school and they depend on to a large extent depend on having interpreters present in some cases in the classes all of the time or much of the time. But the schools are very often there is somebody who is designated as a teacher's aide and they're hired as a paraprofessional who has some signing skills, but isn't really fluent in American Sign Language, which will be that child's primary language and if they don't acquire that primary language, it's really, really hard for them to learn English, which is a second language. And if they don't learn English, they're going to have a hard time with proceeding through the grades, going on to post secondary education, getting jobs, all of that. so there is a progression there that puts kids in an environment where they really don't require sophisticated language skills. And that's -- that's -- that has happened more often than it should for sure. .

REP. BUTLER: So does local board of education have to sign off on the proficiency of the people who are signing or providing that support to the deaf children?

JAMES MCGUAGHEY: Right now, there is -- in the -- there was a bill passed several years ago and you can -- there are actually some other people who will testify who could answer the question better than I can, the deaf children's bill of rights which requires that there be a communication plan for each child that's written into the IEP. And because there are so many different opinions about how best to educate a particular child and because families have different preferences and because in some cases the child may get an implant in which case there will be a totally different approach taken, but nonetheless, there has to be a communication plan because they don't -- cochlear implants do not magically make it possible for people to hear. There has to be a lot of learning and support around that.

But in any event, the -- it is the school's responsibility to say how they're going to meet the communication needs of that child. The difficulty is that there is a state law that says if you are employed as an interpreter for the deaf, you have to be registered with the state, actually, now it's with the Department of Rehabilitation Services. And that means you have to meet certain qualifications and you would be paid at a certain rate. So what has happened historically in schools have met the need of the child by having a teacher's aide or somebody like who does not -- is not qualified that way, present and do some interpreting for the child. And it's -- it's just going to have to change, I think, so that's part of what the standard here would be. There is a reference to a national -- national standard and you would have to score a certain level on the test for that in order to do interpreting in an educational setting.

31
mb/gbr HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

March 13, 2014
11:00 a.m.

REP. BUTLER: Okay. Thank you for your testimony and your answers. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Thank you.

Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you.

Okay. We'll be moving on to the public portion of our sign-ups today for the public hearing and our first speaker is Jeff Braven. You can take some time to set up.

JEFFREY BRAVEN: Good afternoon, Committee. I'm so happy to see you here today. I'm Jeff Braven. I'm the chief operating officer and assistant executive director at American School for the Deaf. I also serve on the board for the Department of Rehabilitation Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Division, which was formerly known as CDHI, Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired. I'm here on behalf of the Raised Bill 5321, which is AN ACT CONCERNING INTERPRETER QUALIFICATIONS. The bill being raised will enhance the qualifications required for interpreters throughout the state of Connecticut and that's directly in line with the national registry of interpreters for the deaf, which is a national recognized member organization that advocates for the excellency of delivery of interpreting services and translating services as well.

People who sign language and people who speak as well are afforded this. Working in collaboration with the deaf community services, encouraging growth in the profession to establish this national standard. We need this in interpreting and more professional development that meets adherence to a code of ethics. This bill also ensures that every deaf and hard of hearing individual including children in the public school system receive

the appropriate interpreting services and this would be with a -- with a qualified interpreting services, which sometimes today, as Jim just today, many situations around the state, schools are not providing the interpreters. There are cases were sometimes the school may place another hearing student themselves that know sign language to interpret for the students in that class. And that's a travesty. It really is.

And that's very hurtful to the student who should be able to access to education. It's the responsibility of the state to ensure that every state, individual receives a quality education access to quality education. Jim also said that there is a need for certified, qualified interpreters and that's absolutely great. We have an issue here in Connecticut. There is a shortage of qualified, certified interpreters. That being said, we do have an associate degree program offered by Northwestern Connecticut Community College. We have other programs at UConn offered for sign language and we have to raise the standards, because it now requires that you have a bachelor's degree and how are we going to be able to improve this quality. Central Connecticut State University is presently now looking for a possibility of developing a four-year program and they are in collaboration right now with Northwestern Community College to set that up.

So we ask for your support in raising this bar and encouraging that to occur. The bill basically makes sure that the state is committed to providing qualified and certified interpreters so that everyone in the state can have access to qualified and certified interpreters. Thank you very much.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Thank you. Thank you for your testimony.

Just a question that has been raised. I understand that we want to increase the quality of our interpreters and the number of qualified interpreters. I think the concern, though, is that if we go higher quality standards, we have less interpreters at least for the initial period of time while people are getting qualified and we don't want to drive down the number of interpreters that currently exist.

JEFFREY BRAVEN: I don't think you would see a decline in that because most of the interpreters present right in Connecticut are certified. They did meet that according to the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Organization. So we would keep that standard there. What the bill does with the standards that we presently have now are just a little below the national level. Most of the interpreters do follow the national level so I don't think that would cause an issue. You would not see a decline in the interpreters that we currently have. I think it's now time for Connecticut to raise this bar to the national level and we want to demonstrate what the rest of the country is doing. And again, we want to bring this whole level up for everyone.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Okay. So if we've got the people who are currently at a particular bar, but we want to raise the bar, are you suggesting that those people would then not be able to be -- they would be able to continue to practice but then we give them a certain amount of time to get to the new requirements. Is that what you're saying? What would happen -- I guess better asked. What would happen to the

people who are currently at the current bar, but they don't meet the raised bar?

JEFFREY BRAVEN: They would need to take testing or a skill assessment to match that standard. For most of the interpreters you see here today and the interpreters we have in Connecticut, I believe it's about 40 or so that's certified here, they'll all qualified. I think all of them would automatically meet that national standard level. I don't believe that would be an issue. The issue comes with towns or the schools, it's an issue that they're not meeting the regulations. They think they're able to get away with just placing a teacher's aide in there or another student or people themselves. They say oh, you have some sign skills, we'll be able to put you in there. I think the state needs to monitor this. I think this is what we're referring to because these students really do deserve equal access to language communication in their education.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Okay. So -- now I understand what you're talking about. So it's -- I realize that the discussion is about all settings, but there seems to be a serious concern with regards to kids in school. Is that correct?

JEFFREY BRAVEN: I think all settings is an access concern because I'm in the education that's probably why I agree with the education. But that being said, I can tell you in the medical field, I believe there is more and more hospitalizations that we and the hospitals right now using VRI, video remote interpreting services instead of using a live interpreter and I think that can be as effective, but what people don't realize is that the VRI interpreters they can be from anywhere else in the country. They could be from Utah, from

California. Now, that being said, we don't know if they're certified or not. Now, the second is that something we have that's called regional signs. It's quite equivalent to accents that you have.

So if you live in the south, you have a different accent from the people who live in New England. The same occurs for people who sign. People who live out west might sign a little bit differently than people who live in New England so sometimes when you're working with a VRI interpreter, you might not understand because it's the region that they're from and we don't know if they're certified as well. There is no way to really monitor that in the medical setting so this bill will really make sure that this becomes monitor because this does not include VRI. I think that's something that the state will have to look into in the future. I think we should just do one step at a time before we address that.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: I agree with you on that. I think there are a lot of people around this committee now going wow that's interesting that I think there is a lot of learning that needs to happen on this end right now. So those are all the questions I have.

Are there committee members who have questions?

No, not at this time. Okay. Thank you.

JEFFREY BRAVEN: Okay. Thank you.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Our next speaker signer is Rachel Spillane.

RACHEL SPILLANE: I'm actually going to speak and they're going to sign.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Okay. All are welcome.

RACHEL SPILLANE: Good afternoon, Senator Slossberg and other distinguished members of this committee. I'm representing -- my name is Rachel Spillane. I am a certified interpreter. I was a former director of a interpreter agency at FSW and I am representing them today. Basically, FSW does support Bill 5321 in improving delivery of interpreting services; however, we do have questions, just like Amy Porter had brought up about costs. Running any kind of program or a monitoring item like that does cost money and we have an additional problem here. It's with the video remote interpreters because the companies are not all located here. We only have maybe one or two companies located in Connecticut that are video remote. Most of them are out of our state and they employ many, many interpreters. I can't even begin to tell you how many companies there are out there or how many interpreters and we don't know if they're registered in the state or not.

I do have the list in front of me from the state. There are 252 registered interpreters. I don't know who they work for. I don't know if they're video remote companies or not. And that brings up the questions, how -- how are we going to track that, you know, the monitoring. So it requires a database. It requires physical people and all of that costs money. I don't see how that can voluntary in any way shape or form. And you know, the bill, the intent is very good, but it does cost. And then they talk about charging fees for licensure of interpreters for the state. Well, we all pay fees to the national registry of interpreters for the deaf and we pay roughly \$130 a year for that, but they have a sliding

fee scale for somebody who is retired or there is something called a certified deaf person.

That person is deaf themselves and they are called a relay interpreter. They go with the hearing interpreter like myself to assignment and the reason for them being there is maybe the deaf consumer is from another country. Each country has their own signing system. So we're dealing with language challenges and there are other issues like that. But they're -- they are -- the certified deaf person does not have the earning potential like the hearing interpreter so those occasions are few where a hearing interpreter would have more assignments. So are you going to charge them the same amount of fees as a hearing interpreter.

Nothing is stated in this bill about what the fees are, is there going to be a sliding fee scale, and if you have 252 interpreters and say the fee is going to be \$100 a year. That's only \$25,000. That to me is not enough to support a monitoring system and we have outside interpreter agencies that also send their interpreters into our state so how are we going to follow-up on that. I mean, there is a lot of -- it's mainly the monitoring and the cost issues that FSW is concerned about. The intent of the bill is great. We always want to improve services and especially with deaf children in deaf schools -- in mainstream school situations. The schools will hire interpreters but they don't call them interpreters. They call them a communication assistant, paraprofessionals, whatever. They might have taken one course in sign language, one semester and they're put with a kindergartener and they think that's fine. And actually, a child that age needs a very good language model because they're learning to talk

so they need to somebody with my years of experience, over 40 years of experience, not somebody who has taken one semester of sign language.

And there is nobody overseeing it. There is no expert at all at these schools. You have 132 towns. You don't have an expert there that actually assesses the person and says, okay, you can work with the child and you can't. And that's a big issue right there as well. And I handed in my print-off. I went off the -- because so many other people already covered so many issues I don't want to be redundant. We do support the bill, but we have questions about the monitoring and the costs.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Thank you very much for your testimony.

Are there questions from the members?

No, seeing none. Thank you.

Our next speaker is Dr. Harvey Corson.

Good afternoon.

HB5321
HARVEY CORSON: My name is Dr. Harvey Corson. I'm past president of the Connecticut Association for the Deaf and I am also a member of the task force on interpreting and also the chair of the Education and Legislative Committee for Connecticut Association for the Deaf. And I want to thank you all for the opportunity to speak to you today about this bill.

Since the original enactment of the law and subsequent changes in statute in 1998 and 2007, there has been significant changes within the interpreting profession serving deaf and hard of hearing persons and within the state of

Connecticut. During the year 2012 and 2013, deaf and interpreting communities collaborated in establishing and conducting a task force on interpreting; one, to review the status of interpreting services being provided in Connecticut and how we fared compared to other states. Secondly, to recommend proposed needs of updating of the current law, Connecticut General Statutes Chapter 814, Section 46a and 33a. We did come up with a summary of the issues and our concerns are as follows: In 1998, there were two primary interpreting referral agencies. The first one was the Connecticut Commission of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing -- Hearing Impaired and that was merged into DORS, which is the Department of Rehabilitation Services in July of 2011, and another agency, Family Services (inaudible) a nonprofit agency in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Presently, there are several national referral agencies that advertise that they can provide interpreting services within the state primarily through remote access. There is no one monitoring the interpreters and these interpreter agencies wondering if they are qualified and are in compliance with our state and our state laws. I would like to mention a few other (inaudible) in my testimony so I can discuss a few more need points and I would like to do that here today.

One area I would like to talk about is many school systems do hire interpreters, but they often find need to do whatever they need to do not in compliance with the current Connecticut laws. And they do this by hiring people with different titles other than interpreter. They call them communication assistants, communication facilitators, teacher's aides. And the concerns are a lot of parents and people who are deaf and hard of hearing, people

are concerned about the education of their deaf and hard of hearing children in the schools. So in 2012, there was legislation proposed called the Deaf Child Bill of Rights and it was a good proposal and it was merged with other laws with special education.

It's called AN ACT CONCERNING INDIVIDUALS, EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND OTHER ISSUES RELATED TO SPECIAL EDUCATION. And that was passed, Public Act 12-173. And that law is now requiring not only to have an IEP, individual education plan, but in that plan, it is necessary to have a language and communication plan for every child identified as deaf or hard of hearing to be educated in the public system here in the state of Connecticut. And that will help to improve and address educational needs of that population of deaf and hard of hearing children.

Also, in the interpreting field, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf recently changed their testing and certification requirements. There has been a focus and an emphasis on upgrading over all requirements in education and training requirements to improve the quality of professionals who are working in the field. Now speaking of needing the standards, it's important that we do not spend time and energy reinventing the wheel. We can use the national standards and apply them so that we don't have to spend time and energy and money doing the same thing; however, the trick is how to apply those same standards here on the state and local levels. There is much that's more economical to the state and it's important to know the reasons because a recent example can be seen in the unqualified sign language interpreter selected to interpret onstage in a worldwide media coverage of the memorial service for former President Nelson Mandela of

South Africa last December. That was shown all over the world. He was not a qualified interpreter. We do not want to have something like that here in this state on a daily basis for daily needs for daily living and daily events that go on in various situations.

The CRI, Connecticut Registry of Interpreters task force was pleased to recognize that this proposed bill incorporated many of their recommendations. First, updated the qualifications and requirements in compliance with the National Certification Body, Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. Secondly, clarifying areas of interpreting settings and institution of registry of fees for all interpreters and any business entity within the state or located out of state that is providing interpreting services within this state by electronic or any other means. Third, establishing the standards of monitoring -- having a monitoring board to ensure compliance and investigate complaints and assess and penalize those who are not in compliance and to educate those who are considering getting interpreting services.

This proposed legislation is in response to raising expectations within Connecticut and is endorsed by the Connecticut Association for the Deaf, the Connecticut Coalition of Organizations Serving the Deaf and the Connecticut Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. I thank you for your consideration and support of this bill.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Thank you for your testimony.

Are there questions?

No? We'll continue to look forward to working with you on this issue and thank you again for being here. Thank you.

HARVEY CORSON: Thank you.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Our next speaker is Susan Peterson.

SUSAN PETERSON: Hi. Okay. Good day, everybody. Okay. My name is Susan Peterson. I'm a past president of the Connecticut Council of Organizations of the Deaf. Unfortunately, the current president could not come today because of a work obligation. She just now gave me 25 copies of my testimony and I hope that you have those copies or are able to get them after this session or I can hand them out now if you'd like. (Inaudible) strongly encourages you to support this bill, 5321, and I just want to summarize some points because several of the people have already spoken have mentioned many of these points so I'm just going to move ahead. We want you to include also blind people in this bill as well. The deaf and blind population that uses sign language is often overlooked and they do need and use sign language interpreters as well.

It is logical to have standards and a monitoring board here at the state level because it's reasonable for the state and local interpreters or agencies or vendors to purchase interpreting services to be able to have a place to vent their frustrations with a state board. That process would be able to have immediate action taken by local members here at the state rather than waiting for the national board to response. Up to this point, some complaints from the state have been brought up to the national board and it takes many, many months or even a matter of several years in

order to get a response from this national board.

In order to make good business sense, any local complaint that is heard in the state of Connecticut should be able to be brought up to a state board so the discussion for where the money goes and how we find the funding, just give us the funding so that we can start this board. Another additional comment that I want to make that's not mentioned in my testimony that you'll get a copy of, I just want to say that lately I have received so many e-mails from out-of-state people requesting us here and even me as a deaf interpreter certified myself, asking us to go out and do assignments here in our state. These are requests from out-of-state companies and they're making a huge profit out of this type of business. What I want to see is that all of the sign language interpreters earn their living from here in the state of Connecticut. We trust our interpreter referral services such as DORS and FSW and other local referral agencies here within the state.

I would strongly encourage you to support bill 5321. Thank you for your time.

REP. STALLWORTH Thank you for being here. Thank you for your testimony.

Any questions from committee members?

Thank you.

SUSAN PETERSON: Thank you.

REP. STALLWORTH Next person is Gary Greco.

GARY GRECO: Good afternoon. My name is Gary Greco and I am the program coordinator and associate

HB5321

professor of the interpreter preparation program, ASL to English, at Northwestern Connecticut Community College. To my left is Dr. Sarah Berment, who is also an educator and adjunct professor teaching in the interpreter preparation program. The interpreter preparation program here at Northwestern Connecticut Community College is the only statewide interpreter training of its kind for the state of Connecticut and has been providing training since 1971 when after the establishment of the then career education for the deaf began in 1974. There was an identified need to train individuals to go on and become professional sign language interpreters in Connecticut and beyond.

Many students who have graduated from our associate's degree program have been able to pass the written portion of the National Interpreter Certification exam which makes them eligible to interpret in the educational setting; however, to become fully certified and to sit for the performance portion of the national certification now requires a bachelor's degree per the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf mandate, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf is a national certifying body that grants certification to eligible candidates and in testimony this morning you have heard this organization named.

This bill coincides and supports the completion of a bachelor's degree within a three-year time frame to sit for and pass the performance portion of the NCI. We're excited about this and as a result of the national standard qualifications and skill to become a certified interpreter, the Northwestern Connecticut Community College IPP programs continues to evolve and raise their standards to provide an educational experience that meets these

requirements and we're very excited about this. One such example is Northwestern's continued collaboration with Central Connecticut State University to create a new articulation agreement that will provide students with the credits need for a smooth transition into a bachelor's degree program.

As a result of this, Central Connecticut State University is the first state university within the CONSCU system that accepts ASL, American Sign Language, as a modern language. While having the option to work in the education field which will enhance their skills to pass the performance portion of the NIC and become fully certified at which time professional certified interpreters will be able to interpret in a variety of settings. There was testimony given by Mr. Jeff Braven who was accompanied by a certified interpreter Marie Cannabo. She, like myself, and Dr. Berment, have all graduated from Northwestern's interpreter preparation program and we're the products of an excellent program which truly maintains the college's reputation as the small college does great things.

Many of you have seen interpreters such as Marie or sign language interpreters here today standing next to the governor who are products of our training programs in times of weather-related crisis where the Governor is speaking at the armory. Northwestern Connecticut Community College and the interpreter preparation program supports and endorses this bill, House Bill 5321, and we ask for your support as well.

Thank you.

REP. STALLWORTH Thank you. Great timing.

GARY GRECO: Perfect timing.

REP. STALLWORTH Thank you.

Any questions from committee members?

Representative Case.

REP. CASE: Thank you.

I want to thank you for coming here today and also thank you for the great program at Northwestern Community College and how do you feel this bill will help strengthen the program and I have gotten some e-mails from people who are concerned for nonprofits in the disabled community that use interpreters and what it's going to do to them as cost to hire interpreters?

GARY GRECO: Okay. We're excited about this bill because it's enabling our program to grow and change and evolve. The bill and also the registry of interpreters of the deaf does require a bachelor's degree and this is an exciting time, as I mentioned, in which Northwestern can partner with CONNSCU system and continue to develop an articulation and further coursework and training. This will unify standards within the state of Connecticut for everyone becoming fully certified and your private, nonprofit organizations that do rely on sign language interpreting, there are free lance interpreters that are certified that are registered with the state of Connecticut but may not necessarily be employed by the state of Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services, formerly known as the Commission.

And part of our training program does touch upon business practices if you're a free lance sign language interpreter and you're certified.

You can work and negotiate your fees as an independent contractor with these private, nonprofit organizations, but the message that we're trying to get across today is professional standards and certifications so that these private, nonprofit organizations in working with certified interpreters know they're getting a certified interpreter that is fully training.

REP. CASE: Okay. And I respect that. What do you feel -- I mean, in order for them to take this next step, what is the cost for an interpreter to go and get that extra certification?

GARY GRECO: Okay. The current pool of -- okay. The current pool of interpreters that are registered with the state are certified. Okay. They meet that standard, okay. The pool of interpreters coming through the system through our program who will go on, there is -- there is the standard educational costs of going to school and obtaining your associate's degree and then what we're hoping for is a bachelor's degree in modern language with a minor in interpreting. So once that is done, they will be able to sit and take the written portion of the National Interpreter Certification and then go on for the performance cost. There is a cost involved in becoming certified and being affiliated of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and that will be part of the educational training that students will go through and people will go through.

But the current pool, they pay the membership as I believe Rachel had explained earlier in testimony, that the current pool already pays an affiliation membership to RID. Okay. And this will continue even for the newer students coming into the program and graduating.

REP. CASE: Great. Well, once again, thank Barbara Douglas bringing out the program (inaudible) to a small town and I appreciate you and the program and everything that's done. We do see the interpreters all around the state of Connecticut from NCC. So I thank you.

GARY GRECO: Thank you.

REP. STALLWORTH Thank you.

Representative Cook.

REP. COOK: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hi, Gary. Great to see you all.

GARY GRECO: Thank you.

REP. COOK: I just have a really quick question. As we were discussing the community college out in our neck of the woods, how many students to we average in the sign language courses per year? Do you know?

GARY GRECO: Thank you.

Currently, we have approximately 30 to 35 students that are spread taking American Sign Language and our sign language and interpreting courses. We will be graduating five students this May who will graduate with their associate's degree in sign language interpreting, two of which already have their bachelor's degree, one will be getting her master's degree. The other students will then transfer hopefully to Central once this articulation gets formulated and is fully established and we will also be providing coursework working with Central and teaching there, as well. So we're really excited.

So in May, we will be graduating five. We do have a few more students coming into the -- going into the interpreting program for the fall. So we have about 35 students.

REP. COOK: Great. Thank you. Thank you very much.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Thank you very much.

I appreciate it.

And are there any other questions?

Okay. We're all set. Thank you.

GARY GRECO: All right. Thank you.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Our next speaker is Keith Vinci.
Good afternoon.

KEITH VINCI: I have to tell you that I find this room very intimidating and I would like to commend all of the previous speakers because they've spoken so eloquently and right to the point and now you're stuck with me.

HBS 321

I think we need to thank the interpreters who are working this event right now because they have worked professionally and they are working very, very hard to convey all of the information that we have and I think -- and I have to take pride because I recruited them so I'm very pleased with that. So thank you.

Many of the things have been said already and I don't want to repeat so I'm going to jump around and this document that I presented that a result of Ambien stupor. You know, I wrote it late of night and I was trying to put it together. So -- but basically, it's true to the fact. Connecticut has lots of (inaudible) who are working. Lots of people who show up

and present themselves as professionals who really aren't. We have school systems that go out of their way to -- to try to hire -- you've heard the stories before about people who have -- don't have the credentials, but change titles, that's not an uncommon experience. It's a very common experience. The -- I remember the story when I was working for the state years ago of the person who worked -- somehow got into the Department of Correction, actually got into the prison grounds telling them that she was an interpreter and a counselor. And she was working there for about a year until we at the Commission found out about it and then got involved to stop that.

So there are lots of people who say that their interpreters who aren't and this bill will certainly help to -- to eradicate some of those problems. You know, imagine if you went to an emergency room and you had a problem and you didn't have an interpreter, you didn't have an interpreter that was really certified or qualified to be there. The results can be horrific. The (inaudible) was a mandated -- that was initiated years ago attests to that fact and seven Connecticut hospitals faced and lost lawsuits because of the miscommunication and lack of provision of professional credentialed interpreting services. You know, imagine a case when you have a serious crime that's been committed and a deaf person is showing up in a courtroom and you don't have adequate interpretation services, you can only imagine what can happen there.

Now, I have been involved with the deaf community my entire life, 60 years. My mother and father were deaf. I've been a professional in the field of deaf and I served on the Commission on the Deaf for 29 years out of my 34 years of service. I served as a job

development placement specialist and later as a interpreter co-coordinator and currently I serve as president of the Connecticut Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, which is the local chapter of the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. We did support this bill. We did have reservations. Some of those reservations have been raised already concerning fees, how you're going to monitor this program, the make-up of the board that's going to be involved with it, basic nuts and bolts kinds of things. But we do support the bill.

School is out.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: That was good timing if you would care to summarize.

KEITH VINCI: Okay. Well, it's mostly that with the advent of competing resources all vying for interpreting business, we really need to make sure that the interpreter law is established, reestablished with the upgrades and that we have a way to make sure that the vendors and consumers adhere to the concept that deaf persons can advocate for themselves as long as they have communication access and this is the method to do that. And I appreciate your time. Thank you.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Thank you very much for being here today for your testimony.

Are there questions?

Thank you.

Are next speaker is Suzanna Gormen.

SUZANNA GORMEN: Hello. Is it okay to go ahead? I'm nervous. This is my first time here.

Well, (inaudible) experience, I've gone to the hospital with my son who has health issues. My son can hear and I'm a deaf person and I requested an interpreter and I was told no because the patient can hear and we were fighting back and forth about this and I was explaining how frustrating this was because I'm the deaf mom. I need to know and I tried to explain if you were a mother coming in and talking about your son you might understand how -- how I'm feeling and the ADA law needs to be changed somehow. Please, I want to have a better system. There are other deaf parents. There are deaf people in the community who experience this day in and day out. Oh, your son is the age of 18, he can speak for himself, but I still need to know what he's saying. I'm his mother.

And to tell me that I'm not allowed to have an interpreter or not and people are making decisions for me is really very frustrating and especially in particular with medical situations in the hospital and I thank you for listening to my testimony.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Are there questions?

I will tell you that's pretty insensitive and as a parent, I can't even imagine how frustrated I would be. She's nervous. It's okay. She's nervous. She's going to sit down.

Thank you.

Oh, sorry. Representative Wood.

REP. WOOD: There is a lot of hands flying. It makes me want to learn this, watching everyone. It's beautiful. Thank you. We're -- thank you, Suzanne, for your testimony. It was very

heartfelt and the passion was very compelling.
Thank you very much.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Okay. Our next speaker is Linda Basehore.

LINDA BASEHORE: I'm coming here for the very first time. My name is Linda Basehore and I am from Danielson. The reason why I came here today is because I want you to support -- be supportive of the interpreter bill 5321. And the most important reason pertains to emergency situations that require medical treatment and that medical treatment is very personal. Many doctors offices and hospitals will not hire sign language interpreters. They prefer to use the VRI and that is a video remote interpreter. When they use VRI interpreters that you see on TV, those interpreters may not be from Connecticut. We have had problems not only connecting to VRI, but once we finally do connect, it is sometimes difficult to understand the interpreters due to both (inaudible) and the qualifications of the interpreters. The signs may vary because it may be interpreters from other states and it is very common that we don't where these interpreters are from so I don't know if they're qualified and a good match me. I know that there are some other states that don't have the same laws as the state of Connecticut does and those states do not always hire certified interpreters.

When I have a live interpreter with me, I know that that interpreter understands me and I know that I can fully trust them and I know that they will understand my signs. In emergencies, I need an interpreter who will understand me and that I will also understand. Thank you so much for your time and I hope that you will

support this interpreter bill, 5321. Thank you.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Thank you, Linda, for coming and speaking with us today. I think with all of the speakers we are learning a lot and understanding much better so we appreciate it.

Our next speaker is James Cusack.

JAMES CUSACK: Good afternoon.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Good afternoon.

HB5321
JAMES CUSACK: I have submitted some printed testimony that I think goes into a little more detail of some of the things I want to talk about. I would like to say to begin that I definitely support the goals of this bill. I support the goals of the law and I support the goal of attempting to improve interpreting services in the state of Connecticut. As a little background, I am an interpreter. I work for the state. I work for the Department of Rehabilitation Services. Before that, I worked for the Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired and I've done that since -- in Connecticut since 1990. I interpret in legal situations. I interpret in medical situations --

Slower? Okay. Sorry.

I'm trying to get in in time.

Okay.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: We've extended the time for the speakers today.

JAMES CUSACK: Okay. And I said, I support the goals of this bill, however, I think there are

some problems with the time frame proposed. From the way I understand it, this bill proposes that its provisions will go into effect beginning July 1, 2014, with regard to legal interpreting, medical interpreting and several other areas. There is a bit of delay with regard to educational interpreting which would allow interpreters time to improve their skills and come up to the standards. A question was asked with Jeff Braven was up here testifying whether he thought this would have an impact on the number of interpreters currently working and I would say yes it would. I believe that there are several interpreters who are perfectly competent, but who don't necessarily meet the specific requirements of certain areas, for example, legal interpreting. There are legal interpreters working in the state now who are competent, who have years of experience, but who may not have 30 hours of legal training and may not work 30 hours every year interpreting in legal situations.

The idea that their skills are going to disappear if they don't interpret for 30 years in a given year is a little silly. People who have been doing this for years might take a year off and come back and still be perfectly competent. So a couple of changes in those areas might be helpful. With regard to medical interpreting, I know from my own personal experience, I've been interpreting for 32 years and I have been interpreting in medical situations for 32 years. I consider myself reasonably competent, but I don't think I could document 30 hours of training in medical interpreting. I might be able to get that, but probably not by July 1st and if this bill were to pass and go into effect, I wouldn't be able to interpret in medical situations until I got those 30 hours of training and I'm sure there are other people in similar positions.

Early on in the bill, it talks about requiring interpreters who work for VRI, video remote interpreting or perhaps even video relay service interpreting, those are the people who provide telephone access to deaf people in Connecticut. Deaf people have video phones. They sign to a interpreter who will then speak into the phone for hearing people. Those interpreters are frequently out of state and it would be kind of difficult for Connecticut to control whether they are certified, whether they meet the Connecticut standard, whether they're registered with the Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services and all of the other requirements of the law.

This may be a sort of backdoor way of attempting to ban video relay interpreting. As you've heard, the deaf community isn't really happy with video remote interpreting, particularly in hospital situations and this may be a way to kind of block the use of that excessively without some kind of supervision. The problem is I don't see anything in here that explains how Connecticut is going to supervise those other interpreters out of state. Maybe there is a plan, but I don't know what it is. If I may also mention that the 30 hours of annual interpreting in legal situations for legal interpreting exceeds the requirement for Connecticut attorneys. I happen to be an attorney. I went to law school in New York, but I'm admitted to practice in Connecticut and as far as I know, there is no requirement that I must practice law a certain minimum number of hours every year in order to be eligible to begin to practice law if I choose to.

And it seems a little excessive to require that sort of thing for legal interpreters,

particularly when even attorneys don't have to do it. In the second section of the bill, the establishment of the interpreting standards and monitoring board is discussed briefly, but the requirements for members of that board are touched upon slightly. The requirements are simply that the members of the board be a deaf consumer, a hard of hearing consumer, a deaf/blind consumer, a hearing consumer, an interpreting professional, a deaf professional or an interpreter trainer and be appointed by the commissioner of Rehabilitation Services. I would very much like to see some additional standards required of those people because simply being in those categories doesn't necessarily one the experience or knowledge to be able to do that kind of job and that board is going to be given, it seems to me, a great deal of power of what sort of people are going to be able to interpret in this state.

So as I say, in general, I very much support the ideas behind this bill, but I think it needs a little tweaking before it can really be implemented and if it were implemented as it stands now, I think it can cause a great deal of damage and it would reduce the number of people who could provide interpreter services in Connecticut at least in the short term.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Thank you very much for your testimony today and for your very specific, you know, comments and suggestions. Thank you. Thank you.

So are there any questions at this time?

Yes, Representative Wood.

REP. WOOD: Thank you.

Just a comment. I had to notice all the attorneys in the room were chuckling when you commented that attorneys don't have a minimum requirement of practice for the year so thank you. That was a point well made.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Thank you.

Our next speaker is Mary Sue Owens. Good afternoon

MARY SUE OWENS: Good afternoon, Senator Slossberg - oh, Representative Cook, yes, she's still here and members of the Human Services Committee. I thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Mary Sue Owens. I have been an educator and an interpreter here in Connecticut for 28 years and I am here to speak in support of House Bill 5321. I would like to give you two examples, October of 2012. I'm sure many of you remember the winter storm that shocked the northeast. Do you also remember the female interpreter who stood by Mayor Bloomberg of New York City during his emergency update? She garnered quite a bit of attention for her very, quote, animated interpreting and she became fodder for many of the comedians and the late night talk show hosts. However, the deaf community defended and praised her for excellent interpreting skills.

Then fast forward to December 2013, the funeral of Nelson Mandela, a male interpreter stands interpreting for various notable speakers, very quickly social media is ablaze with comments from deaf individuals and interpreters insisting that he has to be a fraud. Why? He doesn't have any facial expressions. These are two examples that illustrate that a qualified

interpreter may look very differently if you are deaf or if you are hearing. Laws require that businesses and agencies be accessible, but when it comes to interpreters, they know very little if anything about the skill level of those that they hire. They may defer to an interpreting vendor or an independent interpreter who has shown certifications and degrees and assume that the problem is solved. I'm going to deviate from my testimony a little because many people have spoken to this very same issue.

I do want to touch on the point about educational interpreting because that did seem to drum up a little bit of interest. In Connecticut, the statute that we currently have we thought solved our problem and at that it was passed, we had a Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired that was very active and had the ability to do some monitoring; however, the Commission on the Deaf no longer exists as it did then. Instead Commissioner Porter inherited a very barebones staff, two counselors to serve the needs of all deaf people in the state of Connecticut and four office staff to handle 28 interpreters throughout Connecticut. In the year 2013, those 28 interpreters serviced 13,000 assignments.

In drafting House Bill 5321, our task force had several goals, first was the need to update the language to reflect the certifications that currently offered. Second, to open up opportunities for more interpreters to become eligible to work in legal settings where we currently have a shortage. Third, to support and reinforce the quality and professional development of the interpreters who are working in the legal and medical settings requiring an additional training of 30 hours mandated for

each and given that most of the interpreters that are working in Connecticut in those field, they've already passed that hourly requirement. Educational interpreting, many of us feel we should have our most experienced interpreters in that area because often the children who are in these schools come from hearing families and no one is a language model for them until they get into the school system and they have an educational interpreter.

Very often what has happened is that the school systems hire individuals who have very basic communications skills. They circumvent the law by calling them communication assistants or facilitators. It is a very serious concern. We do acknowledge that there are issues regarding the financial concerns brought up in this House Bill, however, we feel that deaf people have suffered long enough and it's time for them to be assured that they do have true access. We would never allow a ramp to be built to a building leaving the last few steps inaccessible and that's what happens when you have interpreters who are not qualified.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Thank you very much. We appreciate your advocacy and your testimony. I think you made some very good points here and I would encourage the rest of the committee to take a look at the written testimony.

Representative cook.

REP. COOK: Thank you, Madam Chair.

How are you?

MARY SUE OWENS: Good. Thank you. How are you?

REP. COOK: I'm great. I just have a really quick question for those in the room who don't know

how. If we need to hire an interpreter, what is the time constraints on one single interpreter and how does that process work? So if we have this many interpreters that certified and legal to do, you know, signing, but then we have a great amount of people that could need their assistance, is somebody only allowed to sign for long in a given day? What are those constraints? Could you explain?

MARY SUE OWENS: Basically, an interpreter is assigned -- the number of interpreter is assigned depending on the content of the situation. So for example, in this situation, we definitely need two interpreters. You see they're constantly spelling each other, but at the same time, both are actively working. If we were interpreting, for example, a computer class where you would have someone who is working on a computer, they're watching, you know, the professional, going back to working on the computer, that could go for four hours and you would only need one interpreter because they would have natural pauses, natural breaks. So it really depends on the situation itself. In most situations, we use a line of two hours as saying, you know, that's when you really need to be able to provide two interpreters if you're having an appointment that lasts more than two hours, but as we know, if we go to a doctor's office, we sit and wait for an hour before we even see the doctor so one interpreter would be sufficient.

So it really is -- there is no hard and fast rule. It depends on the situation itself.

REP. COOK: Thank you.

Thank you for that information. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Thank you again for your testimony.

MARY SUE OWENS: Thank you.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Okay. I believe that concludes all of our speakers on H.B. 5321.

So at this time, we'll be moving on to House Bill 5500. Do you have one more speaker? There was someone who was not signed up? That was the end of my list. I think we're going to wait a minute because I think we would like to conclude all of the speakers on this bill at one time. That would be useful.

This is Liza Alers. Is that correct? Thank you. Whenever you're ready.

HBS321
LIZA ALERS: Hi. Thank you. (Inaudible.) Just give me a minute. I'm really, really nervous. Okay. I'm really sorry about this letter. It was typed at the last minute. When I heard about this, I really thought about it. This is about my son. He is now 10 years old and he's deaf. When you have been through so many (inaudible) and I've heard a lot of the people who have spoken like Jeff and how he's advocating for education and some of the other people mentioned specifically the field of education. As a mom, I have been through a very frustrating situation especially regarding my son and his schooling. There are several times that he had an interpreter without certification, but that interpreter knew some signs and would interpret for my son and my son would completely have no understanding of what was being said.

You have to understand that my son and I use a mix of American Sign Language and (inaudible) so for interpreters who are certified, they

would know how to modify the language to meet their client's language preferences because there is a broad spectrum between (inaudible) and American Sign Language. So I have requested that the school remove that particular interpreter because my son was missing everything and falling very far behind. At the beginning of the year he started in Southington and they changed interpreters and the interpreters did not have certification, but no one was able to meet the language -- the language need for my son.

Okay. Let me back. He has a teacher at the desk and also there are interpreting services for him so the interpreter will cover, you know, lunch, cafeteria and PE and all of those kinds of things. I'm sorry. I'm getting lost for a minute. I'm sorry. Hold on.

I want the best for my son. I want him to be able to stay on the same track as his peers and not fall behind. In the beginning of the year, he didn't know so many things because he never knew what was going on in the classroom. Now, he's caught up. He even won a spelling bee and that is because I took the steps with the interpreter and the teacher at the desk so now he has able to move forward and make progress because he has access to equal communication.

Also I would like to mention about this particular proposed bill, there are some personal interpreters that I know personally. There are some interpreters that I know professionally. I just want to mention one example. I had one particular interpreter who was a certified interpreter and I requested her specifically and she was there for the birth of both of my children. She was able to accommodate and meet my language needs as I needed and she was there for both of my births.

She might not have necessarily been medically certified, but what I'm trying to say is that, one, I want to make sure that any school system -- public school system that any deaf and hard of hearing child, we must have interpreters that are certified.

I also want to mention that there are many skilled interpreters who are certified and they -- they are completely able to interpret in a legal, medical or educational setting because they meet those qualifications. My only concern is that if you move forward with setting up requirements for interpreters in regards to the legal, medical and educational setting, I'm concerned that that will reduce the pool of interpreters because I know that there are some interpreters who may not meet those minimum hours for legal or medical and so what will happen to them. Will they have time to catch up? The 30-hour training requirement may not be easy for them to meet. So as we move forward with this -- and of course, I do fully support this bill. I absolutely support this. We need the qualified interpreters, absolutely. I'm just concerned about the time frame. I'm concerned not just for myself and my son. I'm concerned for other deaf people as well.

If I were to go to the Department of Social Services, I have to wait three weeks to get an interpreter because an interpreter may not be available and so sometimes I have to wait three weeks so I'm concerned if you go ahead with this bill does that mean I'm going to have to wait even longer because I don't know if the interpreter has that kind of special education. So I just want to make sure that we have the same access that other people do.

That's all.



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 13, 2014**

HB 5321, An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5321, An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications**.

Before outlining our concerns, it's important to detail the critical role hospitals play in the health and quality of life of our communities. All of our lives have, in some way, been touched by a hospital: through the birth of a child, a life saved by prompt action in an emergency room, or the compassionate end-of-life care for someone we love. Or perhaps our son, daughter, husband, wife, or friend works for, or is a volunteer at, a Connecticut hospital.

Connecticut hospitals are committed to initiatives that improve access to safe, equitable, high-quality care. They are ensuring that safety is reinforced as the most important focus—the foundation on which all hospital work is done. Connecticut hospitals launched the first statewide initiative in the country to become high reliability organizations, creating cultures with a relentless focus on safety and a goal to eliminate all preventable harm. This program is saving lives.

Hospitals treat everyone who comes through their doors 24 hours a day, regardless of ability to pay. In 2012, Connecticut hospitals provided nearly \$225 million in free services for those who could not afford to pay. That also means that hospitals provide care to everyone, including those who do not speak English (at all or as a first language) or who may be deaf or hard of hearing – making culturally competent care and health equity a top priority of Connecticut hospitals.

CHA and our member hospitals fully support efforts to continually improve the skills of qualified interpreters; however, immediate adherence to the requirements outlined in HB 5321 would be extremely premature considering the current landscape. This bill is written to strengthen and standardize the qualifications of interpreters serving deaf and hard of hearing persons, but it would not do so. Rather, it would result in a significant decrease to an already limited interpreter pool serving the deaf and hard of hearing population in Connecticut.

Connecticut does not have a large pool of interpreters for deaf and hard of hearing persons. An even smaller portion of that limited pool is willing to serve healthcare organizations due to the unpredictable hours and demands that come with serving in these types of settings. Many in healthcare, including hospitals, must supplement this limited pool with interpreters who can service Connecticut remotely – something provisions in this bill would make more difficult.

Ideally the provisions of this bill may someday be achievable and truly benefit deaf and hard of hearing patients. However, in the context of the current situation, this bill would negatively impact deaf and hard of hearing patients rather than serve them. If HB 5321 passes as written, it will directly result in deaf and hard of hearing persons having fewer interpreters available to them.

CHA certainly supports working toward achieving the goals outlined in this bill, and would appreciate being involved in future discussions around how to do so, but at a minimum, the current timeframes identified in the bill as written do not provide enough time to achieve those goals while still being able to meet the existing population needs.

We cannot stress enough that if this bill passes as written, deaf and hard of hearing persons will be negatively impacted. If the Committee intends to take action on this bill, we would respectfully request that its implementation be delayed until 2018 – the timeline currently proposed for interpreting services in an educational setting. Such a delayed implementation might allow sufficient time for interpreters to meet the requirements of the bill without adverse implications for deaf and hard of hearing persons receiving medical care.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.

T13
page 5, line 177

March 13, 2014

HB5321

My name is Liza Alers and I also have a deaf son, Dylan who's 10 years old. I know many interpreters through personal and professional but I'm here to speak from my and Dylan's experiences. They may be some people disagree or agree with me.

Last night, Dylan and I had discussion about our experiences and what we are hoping to see some changes. Dylan is currently attending Flanders Elementary School in Southington for almost 4 years now. In the past experiences, he had an interpreter without certification. He vented to me that he had a trouble understanding his interpreter due to her sign language. I had to ask the school to remove the interpreter and provide another interpreter to meet my son's needs.

Let me explain- for example – there are many deaf people who signed in American sign language or English Sign language- Dylan and I are mixed of both so it required for interpreters to modify to meet our needs to understand them. Those interpreters who already have certification are aware of how to modify for their clients' needs This is why I feel it's very important for my son or any deaf/ hard of hearing children should have the interpreters with certification.

As a mom, I want the best for my son and I want him to be able to stay on the track with his peers. I had interpreters through middle and high school years- I will forever grateful for their support and took their time to make sure I understand what's happening in the classroom. I want the same experiences for my son.

I also wanted to mention regarding to your proposal I do support of the idea of having those interpreters in specific field however with my experiences- I had same interpreter for my both birth. I know she is not "Medical setting" certificated but I know that I would feel comfortable knowing that she will ensure to tell me everything I need to know.

Lastly, if you go ahead with the proposal, I want you to be aware that it will not only struggle for those interpreters to meet those requirements It will also be a struggle for deaf people because they are very few interpreters who have specific setting such as legal, medical, educational and etc. if you go ahead with the proposal- so Supposed we want to make an appointment, we have to wait more than 3 weeks due to short number of interpreters without those. I felt it is not fair for me or anyone. Its preventing our equally communicate access. If you strongly believe this should happen, I am asking you to please consider and change to within 2 years. It will give them time to take those training or any requirements.

T 11
page 5 level 1
MARCH 13, 2014Comments on: Raised Bill No. 5321 (LCO No. 468) *00468 HS *"AN ACT CONCERNING INTERPRETER QUALIFICATIONS"

My name is James Cusack. I am a Sign Language Interpreter currently employed by the Department of Rehabilitation Services Interpreting Unit. I previously worked as an Interpreter for the Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired. I have been so employed since 1990.

I would like to suggest that the present proposed bill needs some improvements before passage and implementation.

Section 1 (a) 8 (d): "...any business entity, within the state or through remote access, employing an interpreter...shall" comply with this law. This section seems to require that all interpreters working in Connecticut through out-of-state agencies and/or for Video Relay Service (VRS) telephone interpreting services, wherever they are located, must follow this Connecticut law, including registration with Department of Rehabilitation Services (DoRS), in order to provide services to people in the state of Connecticut. Perhaps this is partially dealt with in Section (a) 8 (j) (4).

How is it envisioned that the State of Connecticut will be able to enforce such requirement on interpreters and VRS providers located out of state?

Section 1 (a) 8 (e) (Legal Interpreting): While I am not sure of the experience and qualifications of the too few interpreters currently working for DoRS and other agencies in legal settings, I believe that not all of the current legal interpreters can meet the required "thirty hours of legal training" and "thirty hours annually of interpreting in legal situations".

Some would have no problem, but there may be some who cannot meet this requirement without a substantial additional expenditure of time and money. How many of the current competent legal interpreters would be *excluded* by this new law...at least for the present time? Is there any commitment on the part of the state to provide training and *work opportunities* (*i.e. thirty hours per year*) to all DoRS legal interpreters to allow them to meet these requirements? Would DoRS interpreters have to seek and accept free-lance assignments to maintain the 30 hour annual work requirement? Is there any commitment on the part of the state to provide training and work experience to allow interpreters to maintain qualification, or to allow *new* interpreters become qualified to interpret in "legal settings"?

If I may also note, the "thirty hours annually of interpreting in legal situations" for a legal interpreter to remain qualified to be so employed seems to exceed the requirement for Attorneys licensed to practice law in Connecticut. I believe that while continuing legal education is highly recommended, there is no requirement that an attorney licensed to practice law in Connecticut *must have* such continuing education, nor that he/she must actually *practice law* for any particular minimum number of hours annually in order to remain eligible to do so.

Section 1 (a) 8 (f) (Medical Interpreting): How many DoRS, or any other interpreters currently working in Connecticut, can provide the required "documentation of...a minimum of

thirty hours of medical interpreting training"? Maybe some, maybe many....maybe not so many.

I have been interpreting in "medical settings" for more than thirty years. I consider myself to be competent in that area. While I have taken some workshops that focused on Medical Interpreting, I doubt I can provide documentation of thirty hours of training in medical interpreting.

Among the requirements set forth in the present bill for both Legal and Medical interpreting, is the requirement that an interpreter hold "certification from the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf" (RID). Interpreters may be certified by RID at various levels, reflecting various levels of skill. The present law requires that, in order to interpret in Legal or Medical settings, an interpreter must hold CI and CT certificates. At the time the law was passed, these were the top level of certification, reflecting the top level of skill. The present bill reduces this requirement to *any* certification from RID, even those which *do not* reflect the top level of interpreting skill, thus, *lowering* the required minimum standard for interpreters.

Sections 1 (a) 8 (g) and (k) (Educational Interpreting): The requirements for interpreting in an "educational setting" require the completion of two educational units per year of "department approved training" for uncertified interpreters. Presumably, the "department" referred to here is, as in other sections of the bill, the Department of Rehabilitation Services. I am not aware of any structure or program of "department approved training", nor does the present bill propose any.

Section 2: While the Act is hyper-vigilant about the qualifications required to provide interpreting services in Connecticut, it seems to be silent about any sort of qualification to be a member of the proposed "Interpreting Standards and Monitoring Board", except that one be: a 1) "Deaf consumer", 2) "hard of hearing consumer", 3) "deaf-blind consumer", 4) "hearing consumer", 5) "interpreting professional", 6) "deaf professional", or 7) "interpreter trainer" (none of which is defined) and appointed by the Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services.

I would like to see some sort of knowledge, certification, and/or experience requirement attached to these potentially very powerful positions.

While this proposed law represents a somewhat Utopian ideal of how things *should be* in the world of sign-language interpreting, I am very much afraid that passing it in its present form, with no provision for a structure *and funding* for training and continuing improvement of interpreters, will result in an immediate and drastic reduction of the number of interpreters available to serve the community.

Respectfully Submitted,

James P. Cusack
59 Turkey Hill Road
Chester, CT 06412
(860) 944-2706

T 12
page 5, line 9

Senators Abercrombie and Slossberg, Representative Cook and members of the Human Services Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I am here regarding House Bill 5321, An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications. My name is MarySue Owens and I have been an educator and interpreter here in Connecticut for 28 years.

It was late October of 2012 - I'm sure many of you remember the winter storm that shocked the Northeast. Do you also remember the female interpreter who stood by Mayor Bloomberg of NYC during his emergency updates? She garnered quite a bit of attention for her "very animated interpreting," and became fodder for many comedians and late night talk show hosts, however the Deaf community defended and praised her for her excellent interpreting skills.

Let's fast forward to December, 2013 - the funeral of Nelson Mandela. A male interpreter stands somberly interpreting for various notable speakers. Very quickly social media was overwhelmed with comments from Deaf individuals and interpreters insisting he must be a fraud. It was obvious to them due to his lack of facial expressions.

I raise these two examples of interpreting because of the attention they each drew in the media and to illustrate that a qualified interpreter may look quite different depending on whether you are deaf or hearing. Since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act before that, businesses, schools, hospitals, courts, and others are required to make their facilities and services available to their clients and consumers. While it is incumbent on them to hire interpreters most would agree they know very little, if anything, about the skill levels of those they hire. Often they will defer to an interpreting vendor and assume that their problem is solved. Or they may have been approached by an independent interpreter showing certifications and degrees and feel assured that the individual has the requisite skills.

This is the reason why the passage of HB 5321 is so important.

The task force that commenced more than two years ago was comprised of interpreters and leaders from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. In response to complaints and concerns raised from consumers and professionals the task force chose to look at the current statute, CT General Statute Chapter 814, Sec. 46a-33a, and determine what was working and where changes should be made. Since its initial passage, the structures for deaf advocacy and support changed here in CT. Originally there was effectively only one game in town, the Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired. Years later, Family Services Woodfield in Bridgeport also began providing interpreting services throughout the state, primarily in medical settings. Both agencies had the ability to evaluate their staff in house and determine the assignments for which each interpreter was qualified.

In the mid to late 90s we began to see more agencies and vendors from outside the state and independent interpreters entering the CT market. While some of the interpreters did have the appropriate skills, Deaf and Hard of Hearing consumers were encountering less than qualified interpreters and felt there was nothing they could do. This prompted the passage of the current statute, with the responsibility of overseeing that interpreters and those hiring interpreters were complying falling to the Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, CDHI. However the structure of what used to be CDHI has changed. When Commissioner Porter inherited the

agency a few years ago it consisted of a bare bones staff – two counselors to address the needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals statewide, and an interpreting unit of four office staff to handle scheduling, questions, billing and management for the staff of twenty eight interpreters. These interpreters covered over 13,000 assignments from January 1 to December 31, 2013.

An area of primary concern, then and now, was the “interpreters” who were working in the school systems. I use quotation marks here because it was not uncommon for towns and schools to use different labels so as to not have to comply with the statute. These individuals were called communication facilitators, signing aides, or language assistants. While there are many talented and qualified Educational Interpreters there are those who have very rudimentary skills, sometimes just one or two semesters of sign language. In that most deaf children are born to hearing parents it does happen with some that their interpreter also becomes their sign language teacher and model. Whether these children later transfer to the American School for the Deaf or they meet professional interpreters in medical or legal settings it is then they realize that others may not fully understand them and vice versa.

In drafting HB 5321 the task force had several goals:

First, the need to update the statute’s language to reflect the certifications that are currently offered by the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, our professional organization and certifying body.

Second, to open up opportunities for more interpreters to become eligible to work in legal settings where we currently have a shortage.

Third, to support and reinforce the quality and professional development of our interpreters working in legal and medical settings, where there is an initial training of 30 hours mandated for each. Afterwards interpreters are required to work in that venue for a minimum number of hours annually to maintain and improve their skills.

Fourth, focusing on the area of Educational interpreting, where many feel we should have our most skilled interpreters, we wanted to ensure that Deaf and Hard of Hearing students have access to a minimum level of competence. While this area remains the only venue where an uncertified interpreter may work, there is a maximum time frame by which the interpreter must acquire certification by RID or score above a certain score on the Educational Interpreter’s Performance Assessment.

Lastly, in creating a monitoring board we wanted to provide consumers with concerns about an interpreter or an interpreting vendor an avenue to have those concerns heard and investigated.

Senators Abercrombie and Slossberg, Rep. Cook and members of this committee, I urge you to pass this bill to assure all consumers of interpreting services in CT that we are committed to providing access through the use of qualified interpreters for all of our citizens.

Thank you.

MarySue Owens, M.Ed, CSC, NAD V, SC:L
msoky@aol.com
860-537-6692

T10.
page 4, line 22

My name is Linda Basehore from the Danielson area

The reason I come here today is I want you to support the Interpreter Bill 5321

Impo-2x
Main reason is because I had a couple of emergency situations that required medical treatments which was very personal. The doctor's office and the hospital would not hire sign language interpreter. They wanted to use VRI which is Video Remote Interpreter. This is when they use interpreters that you see on the TV. These interpreters ^(can) may not be from Connecticut. We had problems with VRI connection but when we connected with the interpreter, it was sometimes difficult to understand the interpreter (due to technology and the quality of the interpreter or the signs different because of the interpreter from another state). With VRI, it is often you do not know where the interpreter is from. I am not sure if they are qualified to interpret for me. I know that some other states do not have same law as CT and not hire certified interpreters. When I have a live interpreter with me, I know the interpreter understands me. I know I can trust them and know my signs. In an emergency, I need an interpreter that will understand me, and that I understand.

Thank you for your time and I hope you will support this Interpreter Bill 5321

My name is Keith Vinci and I've been involved with the Deaf community my entire 60 years; my mother and father were Deaf. I have been a lifetime professional in the field of HB5321 Deafness. I served 34 years of continuous State employment providing direct service to Deaf consumers. I worked 29 of those years for the State Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired [CDHI]. CDHI was the first state agency in the nation to recognize the uniqueness of Deafness and provide direct ancillary service to those Deaf citizens in their struggle to become independent and maintain independence. CDHI was established to serve as the State agency advocating the civil and disability rights of persons Deaf. This very same agency served as the continuing model of effectiveness and efficiency in Deaf services for the nation until the previous two administrations decimated the agency despite it being fiscally sound and cost effective. At CDHI, I served as the Job Development and Placement Specialist, and later, until my retirement in 2009, as an Interpreter Co-coordinator. Currently, I serve the interpreting community as the President of the Connecticut Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf [CRID], the state chapter of RID. As CRID President, I would like to report that CRID supports the proposed bill along with CAD and CCOSD [with some minor revisions noted].

During most of my tenure at CDHI, the agency was the sole provider of certified interpreters for the Deaf statewide.

Interpreter qualifications and skills were assessed before hire as part time state employees in the CDHI Interpreting Unit. Quality control of interpreters and interpreting services were strictly maintained within CDHI. Today, mostly resulting from the whittling down of CDHI mentioned above, and the simultaneous encouragement of privatization of interpreting services, there are numbers of competing companies, individuals, and organizations vying for interpreting business. Each with their own "interpretations" as to what allows them to work in Connecticut as an interpreter.

Many years ago Connecticut professionals in the field of Deafness, mostly from ASD and CDHI recognized the need for ASL and sign language interpreters trained and skilled to meet the high demand for interpreting services in Connecticut. Interpreting standards had been established by the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf [RID], the certifying professional organization of interpreters. These standards were set and interpreters throughout the nation worked toward RID certification. Certification meant that one who is "certified" had the competency to interpret in a variety of settings. As a result, Deaf persons accessing certified interpreters felt reasonably confident that an RID certified interpreter would comfortably and effectively work an interpreting assignment.

With the advent of competing interpreting resources varying levels of competency arose, the first Task Force was established

and the Interpreter Law subsequently was passed into Law. Today we're discussing the updating of that Interpreter Law. Much time has passed and the field of interpreting has progressed and changed. This law allows for improvements and insures that only those properly trained and credentialed can interpret. The law also insures that vendors and consumers adhere to the concept that Deaf persons can advocate for themselves as long as they have communication access.

Keith Vinici
 34 Stalley Rd
 Middletown, Ct 06457

Retired

Cell - 860-508-2927

KVINIC53@gmail.com

T9
 (page 4, line 14)

Public Hearing – March 13, 2014, Proposed Update of
 Interpreter Law

HB5321

Connecticut is home to many charlatans...communication charlatans...some intentional, some inadvertent. Friends interpret for friends...family members interpret or talk for their family members....supervisors ask co-workers to explain job related duties and policies to their Deaf co – worker.....and some individuals who pawn themselves off as professionals as a con to gain some personal advantage [money or celebrity]. It's very nice and commendable for persons to communicate with Deaf persons in the innocent day to day events, but when circumstances require clarity and in depth understanding, when negative consequences can result, an interpreter is needed. All too often, the use of interpreters is circumvented for convenience or financial reason. For example there are people who take a sign language class and then are hired in public schools where an interpreter is needed. The novice is hired as a "sign language specialist". How and why does that happen? When a "sign language specialist" is hired instead of a certified interpreter, the school systems save money through a false job title and the mainstreamed child suffers; when an inexperienced

interpreter who may be recently credentialed because he/she graduated from a two [2] year college program enters a hospital emergency room, communication is skewed; the results can be horrific. The "Consent Decree" mandate initiated years ago can attest to that fact, as seven [7] Connecticut hospitals faced and lost law suits adjudicated by the Department of Justice because of mis-communication or lack of provision of professional credentialed interpreting services. When an inexperienced sign language interpreter enters a courtroom or a deposition, those of us who know the business of interpreting are fearful as to the possible outcomes. Educational, Judicial, Health Care, Mental Health these are all specialty areas where the proposed Law sets standards for interpreters. Our state has not provided training mechanisms or policed non-credentialed persons calling themselves "sign language interpreters". The proposed amendments to the current law and the recommendations cited in the Law will serve to protect our Deaf Citizens.

Public Testimony Before Joint Legislative Committee on Human Services
Regarding Raised Bill # 5321 – Interpreter Qualifications
Thursday, March 13, 2014

TG
page 3, line 16

Senator Gayle Slossberg and Rep. Catherine Abercrombie, Co-Chairs & Members of Human Services Committee,

I am Dr. Harvey Corson, Past President of Connecticut Association of the Deaf (CAD), Co-Chair of the CAD Education and Legislative Committee, and Member of the Connecticut Registry of Interpreters of the Deaf (CRID) Task Force on Interpreting. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak before you about this bill.

Since the original enactment of this law and subsequent changes in statutes in 1998 and 2007, there have been significant changes within the interpreting profession serving deaf and hard of hearing persons and within the state of Connecticut.

During 2012 - 2013 the Deaf and Interpreting communities collaborated in establishing and conducting a Task Force on Interpreting 1) to review the status of interpreting services being provided within Connecticut and how we fared compared with other states and 2) to recommend proposed needed updating of the current interpreter law, CT General Statutes, Chapter 814, Section 46a - 33a.

Here is a summary of the issues and concerns that were observed.

**In 1998 there were primarily two interpreting referral agencies, the CT Commission of the Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI) which was merged into the new CT Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) effective July 1, 2011 and FSW (Family Services Woodfield), a non-profit agency in Bridgeport, working in the state. Presently, there are several national referral agencies that advertise they can provide services within the state, primarily through remote access. There is no one monitoring that the interpreters these agencies are using are qualified and in compliance with our CT statute.

**Traditionally school systems have hired the least qualified interpreters. This has a significant, long-term impact on the language and communication development of deaf and hard of hearing children with whom they work. Many of these "interpreters" do not meet the requirements as put forth in the statute. Often, to avoid compliance some school districts use other labels and job titles, such as communication facilitator, communication assistant, or teacher aide, when in fact the person is actually providing "interpreting" services as was outlined in the statute.

**Within the interpreting field, the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (NRID) has recently changed its testing and certification requirements. There has been a focus on upgrading educational and training requirements and improving the overall quality and professionalism of those working within the field.

Public Testimony Before Joint Legislative Committee on Human Services
Regarding Raised Bill # 5321 – Interpreter Qualifications
Thursday, March 13, 2014

****Nationally, the Deaf and Interpreting communities are requiring that qualified interpreters meet higher expectations and standards as the lives of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children and adults can literally depend on the skills of their interpreters. A recent example of this effort is the "Deaf Child's Bill of Rights", included in section 11 of CT PA 12-173, An Act Concerning Individualized Education Programs and Other Issues Relating to Special Education, requiring a Language and Communication Plan be developed for every child identified as Deaf or Hard of Hearing by the Planning and Placement Team (PPT)**

****Due to the fact that there was no monitoring of interpreters working in CT, and no penalties for those who were not in compliance, we have seen broad disregard for the law. Additionally, the original statute provided for no penalties to those who did not comply. This has led to substandard provision of interpreting services in many situations, which can lead to serious outcomes. A recent example can be seen in an unqualified sign language interpreter selected to interpret on stage in a world-wide media coverage of the memorial service for former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa last December.**

Based on these concerns, and with a commitment to improving and maintaining the quality of interpreting services provided in Connecticut, the CRID Task Force on Interpreting is pleased to see its recommended needed updating/changes incorporated in this proposed legislation --

- 1) Update the qualifications and requirements in compliance with the national certifying body, the National Registry of Interpreters of the Deaf;
- 2) Clarifying the areas of interpreting settings and the institution of a registering fee for all interpreters and any business entity, within the state or located out of state providing interpreting services within the state, by electronic or other means; and
- 3) Establishment of a standards and monitoring board to oversee and ensure compliance, investigate complaints, assess penalties to those not in compliance, and to educate those who are securing interpreting services.

Accordingly, this proposed legislation to update and strengthen interpreter standards is in response to the raised expectations within Connecticut and is endorsed by the Connecticut Association of the Deaf, the Connecticut Coalition of Organizations Serving the Deaf, and the Connecticut Registry of Interpreters of the Deaf

Thank you for your consideration and support of this proposed legislation.

T 7
page 3 line 20

Good day, Honorable Chairpersons Gayle Slossberg and Catherine Abercrombie,

I am Susan Pedersen, Past President of Connecticut Council of Organizations Serving the Deaf (CCOSD). Unfortunately President Alexandra McGee cannot be here due to her work so I am speaking on behalf of CCOSD.

CCOSD strongly encourages you to support this bill 5321 regarding to strengthen and standardize the qualifications of interpreters serving deaf and hard of hearing person. Please include deaf-blind persons to this bill. Deaf-blind population that use sign language is often overlooked. They do need and use the interpreters.

It is logical to have the standards and monitoring board on the state level because it is reasonable for the state/local working interpreters or agencies/vendors who purchased the interpreting services to vent their complains or frustrations with the state board. The process would be taken immediately by the local qualified board members instead the national board members. Since the formation of the national board, some complaints from our state have reported their cases to National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (NRID) but it takes many months to get the results from these different board members who live across the nation. To make good business sense, any local complaints within the state should be taken by the state board.

Please vote in favor of this bill 5321. CCOSD, consisting of more than 25 member organizations, strongly encourages you to upgrade our state law regarding to the change in National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf certifications. Deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing citizens could continue to access information through qualified sign language interpreters certified by NRID who are registered to work in the state with Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) as mandated by the state law.

Thank you.
www.CCOSD.org

HB-5321

Testimony

TJ
page 3, line 24

House Bill 5321: An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications. To strengthen and standardize the qualifications of interpreters serving deaf and hard of hearing persons.

My name is Gary Greco, and I the Program Coordinator/Associate Professor of the Interpreter Preparation Program, ASL to English here at Northwestern Connecticut Community College.

The Interpreter Preparation Program here at Northwestern Conn. Community College is the only statewide Interpreter Training of its kind, and has been providing this training since 1977 when, after the establishment of the then, Career Education for the Deaf Program began in 1974, there was an identified need to train individuals to go on in becoming Professional Certified Sign Language Interpreters in Connecticut and beyond.

Many students who have graduated from our Associates Degree program have been able to pass the written portion of the National Interpreter Certification, (NIC) which makes them eligible to interpret in the educational setting. However, to become fully certified, and to sit for the performance portion of the NIC, now requires a Bachelor's Degree, per the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, (RID) mandate. The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf is the National Certifying Body that grants certification to eligible candidates.

This bill coincides and supports the completion of a Bachelors Degree within a 3 year time frame to sit for, and pass the performance portion of the NIC.

As a result of the National Standard qualifications and skill to become a certified interpreter, NCCC/IPP continues to evolve and raise their standards to provide an educational experience that meets these requirements. One such example is NCCC's continued collaboration with CCSU to create a new articulation agreement that will provide students with the credits needed for a smooth transition into a Bacheloriate Degree Program (as a result of this, CCSU is the first State University within the ConSCU System that accepts ASL as a Modern Language) while having the option to work in education which will enhance their skills to pass the performance portion of the NIC and become fully certified. At which time they will be able to interpret in a variety of settings.

I would like to ask at this time for all the Interpreters in this room who are here, and who are alumni of NCCC's Interpreter Preparation Program to stand. These are the products of our excellent program which truly maintains our reputation as "The small college that does great things". Many of you here today have seen these individuals standing next to the Governor in times of state emergencies providing critical information in keeping Connecticut's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community informed.

NCCC supports and endorses this bill, (House Bill 5321: An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications. To strengthen and standardize the qualifications of interpreters serving deaf and hard of hearing persons.) in becoming law.

Thank you very much,

Gary Greco

T5
 page 3, line 127

To: Human Services Committee overseeing Raised Bill No. 5321

From: Rachel Spillane, Certified Sign Language Interpreter, Designee of FSW
 475 Clinton Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06105 rspillane@fswinc.org

RE: Interpreting services, monitoring, fees

FSW Interpreting Services is part of FSW non-profit agency that provides many support services to the population at large as well as targeted population i.e. the Deaf Community. FSW Interpreting services has been continuously running since 1995 and provides over 4,000 interpreting requests per year with a staff of 36 interpreters.

FSW supports Bill 5321 to help improve delivery of Interpreting services in CT.

In addition, FSW needs clarification of the following items of Bill 5321.

1) On page 3 (d) Commencing September 1, 2014, any business entity, within the state or through remote access, employing an interpreter who is providing services in CT shall ensure the interpreter is in compliance with the requirements of this section.

Many video remote companies headquarters and sites are outside of CT and employ interpreters that do not reside in CT. What methodology is going to be employed to track all of the video remote interpreting that occurs in CT in order to ensure that those interpreters are registered with the State and comply with Bill 5321?

In addition, many interpreting agencies that do not have their headquarters in CT also provide interpreting services in CT and again what methodology is going to be employed to track those interpreters?

In addition, who is going to physically go to school systems, businesses etc. and check the credentials of each person who may be functioning as an interpreter? Many school systems do not use the word interpreter, they may use labels such as communication assistant, aide and etc. So this would mean that someone would have to go to the various schools and observe staff who work with the deaf in order to get a clear idea what their true job function is with the deaf child.

The monitoring questions also brings in the question of cost of doing this kind of follow up in order to comply with Bill 5321. The concern is that the cost will be on the backs of interpreters who have to pay the licensing fee in order to work in CT. There are 252 registered interpreters on the registry list, so even if the fees were \$100 per person, \$25,200 is not sufficient to cover monitoring costs. I think the cost of this type of monitoring system should not be based only on collection of interpreter's fees, but it should also be assessed against Video Remote Companies and outside interpreter agencies whose corporate headquarters are outside of CT but yet reap the monetary benefit of doing business in CT. Otherwise the cost of monitoring could put the fees to an unreasonable rate for interpreters who reside and work in CT, since rate was not even stated in this bill.

Thank you for your time and attention to the above matter.

T4
page 2, line 25

AMERICAN SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

Edward F. Peltier, Executive Director

March 13, 2014

HB 5321: An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications. To strengthen and standardize the qualifications of interpreters serving deaf and hard of hearing persons.

Good morning. My name is Jeffrey Bravin and I am currently the Chief Operating Officer/Assistant Executive Director at the American School for the Deaf (ASD). I also serve on the Board for the Department of Rehabilitation Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services division (formerly known as the Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired or CDHI.) I am here on behalf of ASD to support the Raised Bill No. 5321 – An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications.

The Bill, as raised, is enhancing the qualifications required for all interpreters in the State of Connecticut which is in line with the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. This is the nationally recognized member organization that advocates for excellence in delivery of interpretation and transliteration services between people who use sign language and people who use spoken language. They work in collaboration with the deaf and hard of hearing communities in encouraging the growth of the profession through the establishment of a national standard for qualified sign language interpreters and transliterators, ongoing professional development and adherence to a code of profession conduct.

This Bill also ensures that every deaf and hard of hearing individual, including children in public schools, gets appropriate interpreting services with an appropriate certified and qualified interpreter, which is sometimes not the case today. We have a responsibility as a state to ensure appropriate access to language and effective communication for every individual.

I also want to take the opportunity to mention that there is a concern about the limited number of qualified, certified sign language interpreters in the State of Connecticut. Currently, we have an Associate degree program for sign language interpreting offered by Northwestern Connecticut Community College and sign language and deaf culture classes offered at the University of Connecticut. However, because the standards now require a Bachelors of Arts degree, we would like for the State to push for our college system to provide for these opportunities. Central Connecticut State University is now exploring the possibility of offering a four-year Bachelor degree program in collaboration with Northwestern Connecticut Community College.

This bill ensures that the State is committed to provide for qualified, certified interpreters so that effective communication can happen for every individual in the state of Connecticut. Thank you.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY FOR
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
60B WESTON STREET, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06120-1551

James D. McGaughey
Executive Director

Phone 1/860-297-4307
Confidential Fax 1/860-297-4305

Testimony of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities
before the Human Services Committee

Presented by: James D. McGaughey
Executive Director
March 13, 2014

Good morning, and thank you for this opportunity to comment in support of **Raised Bill 5321, An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications**. This bill will update State requirements for qualified sign language interpreters for deaf people, bringing Connecticut into alignment with emergent national standards. It will also create an Interpreting Standards and Monitoring Board within the Department of Rehabilitation Services, to oversee interpreter qualification and registration processes and to act on complaints.

Having worked with and represented many Deaf and Hard of Hearing people over the years, our Office is quite aware of the important role that professional interpreters play in ensuring equal access and fair treatment for people who are deaf. Many of the cases we have worked on involve situations where qualified interpreters should have been scheduled or called to ensure effective communication in critically important situations – situations where medical procedures were being performed or life-defining medical decisions were being made; where police relied on family member witnesses to interpret during investigations into allegations of domestic violence, or where the possibility of bringing a complaint of discrimination before an adjudicatory body was being discussed with lawyers who did not understand their own obligations to ensure effective communication with deaf clients.

The stakes can be quite high in those environments, and so it is important that interpreters not only be present, but that they be qualified: that they be thoroughly versed in and practiced at the art of interpreting language concepts between two quite different languages, American Sign Language and English; that they be familiar with the particular vocabulary and overall context of specialized settings such as hospitals and courtrooms; and that they can accurately convey not only the words and phrases being used, but their intended meaning as well. This implies that in those specialized settings, the interpreter must possess a sophisticated understanding of both the languages used and the systems involved; the jargon, the various roles that different actors and institutions play, and the fundamental components of the business being transacted. Equally important, they need to make sure the deaf person for whom they are interpreting is understanding the information being presented or requested. In fact, professional interpreters have an ethical responsibility not to continue interpreting in a situation where they can tell that the communication is not succeeding. Interpreting is much more than translating (although there

(Over please)

are some situations where transliteration is appropriate). It is very much an interactive, inter-personal process. Yet it is one that demands high levels of skill, role-consciousness, commitment to ethical standards and personal integrity.

The business of establishing standards for interpreters has a lengthy and somewhat convoluted history. However, for over a decade, the two major national organizations that historically sponsored training and credentialing processes – the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) – have been working together to establish a uniform examination and credentialing process – one which has recently been validated through a major independent review. The momentum behind this National Interpreter Certification process is substantial, and it is increasingly being recognized as the definitive standard for interpreter qualification. This proposal recognizes the primacy of that credentialing process, but also allows appropriate “grandfathering” for experienced interpreters who hold older credentials. The addition of references to specialized certificates for interpreting in legal and medical settings establishes clear qualification targets for interpreters seeking to work in those areas. I am especially pleased to see that the Bill includes references to the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment system (EIPA). Interpreting in educational settings, particularly in elementary schools, has often been seen as less important or less demanding than interpreting in other settings. However, like all children, deaf children need exposure to adult role models who use language with precision and grace. In the absence of such role models, too many deaf children have failed to develop age-appropriate skills in their primary language, and to acquire information in all subject areas as they progress through the grades. Often, they also have great difficulty becoming literate in English – a language they will need to master in order to pursue higher education and productive careers. Ensuring that interpreters working in educational settings are qualified will help overcome the cycle of low expectations and low levels of achievement that traps so many young deaf people in marginal jobs and living situations.

Just as RID and NAD have worked together to establish a uniform credentialing system at the national level, representatives of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities here in Connecticut have worked together with the Connecticut Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf to develop consensus about the improvements embodied in this Bill. Having experienced the frustration and witnessed the sometimes very unfair consequences that result from poor interpreting by unqualified individuals, both groups see establishment of an Interpreting Standards and Monitoring Board, as called for in Section 2 of this Bill, as a critical safeguard. Indeed, the proposed Board will be composed of representatives from all affected consumer and provider constituencies, and will function much like other professional credentialing and monitoring bodies. Establishing this Board will do more than police interpreting practices; it will also help secure appropriate recognition for interpreting as a profession, and, ultimately, serve to encourage more people who have learned ASL, either at home or through college coursework, to pursue the additional training needed to become credentialed as professional interpreters.

For all of these reasons, our Office urges you to act favorably on this measure. If there are any questions, I will try to answer them.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

T 2
page 2. line 11

Testimony before the Human Services Committee
Commissioner Amy L. Porter

House Bill 5321 - An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications
March 13, 2014

Good morning Senator Slossberg, Representative Abercrombie and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the Department of Rehabilitation Services' perspective on Raised Bill 5321, An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications.

Overall, we support the intent of the bill. It aligns the state's interpreter qualifications with those of the national certifying organizations. It also provides a long-term opportunity to increase the number of qualified interpreters available in specific types of settings, such as medical, legal and educational settings. It also provides some clarity of expectations within certain settings. I know there are numerous individuals and organizations who have been involved in the development of this proposal and I appreciate their efforts to continuously improve our interpreting service structure.

On a more detailed level, we wanted to share some considerations about costs and timelines. - Before addressing the specific sections, one overarching suggestion relates to the global nature of the term "interpreting". It might be helpful to specify up front that the interpreting services described involve only those interpreting services used for communication with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

In the definitions section, we have one primary concern regarding the definition of medical setting in Section 1(a)(7). Because the language about the settings is vague, it may apply to more settings than intended. For instance, if a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is working on developing an employment plan with a job seeker with a disability, they will be discussing health and disability issues. There is some concern that this could be construed as a medical setting, which we do not believe is the intent of the language change.

In section 1(b), the statute describes the need for all interpreters to register annually with our Department. This seems to include interpreters who are working in Connecticut through agencies operated from states outside Connecticut, including those who are interpreting through the Video Relay Service. Our department has some concerns about enforcement of this requirement.

In section 1(c), the proposal adds the collection of a registration fee beginning on October 14, 2014. We believe that there will be a cost associated with this requirement, given that additional staffing would be necessary to establish a fee schedule, collect fees, assess penalties, etc. It is unclear how the fee will be assessed for interpreters who are State of Connecticut employees. This same section also requires the creation, printing and dissemination of brochures, and the provision of related education and training. The proposal contemplates that these costs will all be covered by the fees collected, but there is no consideration for startup costs or estimates of the level of fees that would be required to meet the expectations outlined in the bill.

In Section 1(e) and (f), the proposal adds training requirements for work in legal and medical settings. While we understand the intent, there are some considerations. In terms of cost, it is unclear how the training costs will be paid for interpreters who are State of Connecticut employees. Also, if implemented, we believe that we need to consider a timeframe for implementation that does not adversely impact service delivery. If we make these requirements effective immediately, the pool of interpreters qualified to work in these settings will decrease and result in fewer interpreter assignments being filled. The pool of interpreters qualified to work in these settings is already limited.

Section 2 is a new section that requires our Department to appoint an Interpreting Standards and Monitoring Board. This would create additional costs for our Department in terms of coordinating meetings, completing and posting meeting agendas and minutes, working with other agencies to develop an appropriate fee schedule, and, as mentioned previously, the assessment of penalties and the collection of fees and penalties. Additionally, we are not clear whether the board would be made up of volunteers and would need information on associated costs that might be incurred such as travel, interpreting services, and other accommodations. Given that there are no funds allocated for this activity, we oppose the inclusion of this component in the bill.

Again, I'd like to thank the committee for inviting me to testify today, and our Department looks forward to working with you on a realistic implementation timeline for the provisions of this bill that are cost-neutral.