

House Professional Licensure Committee  
Public Hearing on House Bill 1596  
March 5, 2008  
Temple University

Representative Todd Eachus  
Testimony

First and foremost, I would like to thank Chairman Sturla for calling a hearing on House Bill 1596, and thank Chairman Adolph and the rest of the Committee Members for their attention to this proposal.

In 2004 the General Assembly passed and Governor Rendell signed into law Act 57, the Sign Language Interpreter and Transliterators State Registration Act, which created state registration for interpreters and transliterators and provided much needed consumer protection to the deaf and hard of hearing.

However, last spring and unintended consequence of Act 57 was brought to my attention, which initiated this legislative initiative. Specifically, from my understanding, graduates of accredited programs in Pennsylvania who still needed field experience have been virtually shut out of job opportunities because they are not state registered, yet they need experience to pass the tests required to obtain state registration from the Department of Labor and Industry.

Based on recommendations from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf's national office, I introduced House Bill 1596, and subsequently worked with L&I's Office for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing on an amendment that will tighten the language to ensure continued consumer protection and give recent graduates an outlet to gain the field experience needed to obtain state registration in Pennsylvania and be gainfully employed in our Commonwealth.

House Bill 1596, coupled with the amendment, will amend Act 57 of 2004 to add Section 5.1. Section 5.1 provides for Provisional Registration, a concept developed from a policy paper by Ben Hall, President of RID, which suggests that a graduate of an Interpreter Education Program with an Associate Degree or Higher has five years from the date of graduation to obtain national credentials.

After reviewing comments made by the Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing discussing language with Labor and Industry, Section 5.1 will do the following:

- Provide for a Provisional Registration in Pennsylvania.
- Require that the applicant apply to Labor and Industry's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The application must include:

- A \$100 fee, which is consistent with the fee for state registration.
- Proof that the applicant graduated from an interpreter education program, with an associate degree or higher from an accredited institution of higher education within 5 years prior to the application date.
- Proof that the applicant passed a written examination approved by the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.
- The Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing will review the application and issue a provisional registration if the application is complete, the aforementioned requirements are met, the applicant is 18 years of age or older and any other requirement deemed appropriate by the Office.
- A provisional registration will only be issued for one year and cannot be used in:
  - A legal setting;
  - A mental health setting unless accompanied by an interpreter who has current state registration; or
  - A medical setting unless the patient is informed the interpreter has a provisional registration and the patient has the right to request and be provided an interpreter with state registration.
- The provisional registration can be renewed twice consecutively. The same application requirements apply to every renewal, coupled with proof of the completion of 20 hours of professional development.
- If an applicant changes their personal information for any reason or violates the act, the same procedures and penalties apply. However, if a provisional registration is revoked there is not an opportunity to obtain another provisional registration. Rather, an individual may apply for a state registration no earlier than five years after the date of revocation.

That summarizes the bill and the amendments, and the intent to keep our educated students in our state and give them the needed experience while protecting the consumer.

Thank you for your attention. I will now take questions from the Committee.