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Sent: Tuesday, February 05, 2008 4:38 PM

To: Dawes, James

Subject: Statement for the Hearing on HB1596 on Feb. 8th at Temple University

As a deaf consumer of the interpreting service in the State of PA, I agree with the premise behind the proposed amendment to HB1596. I and the deaf community have been fighting to improve the quality of interpreting which was mediocre for many years. And the license route was the only and best way we could use to rectify the situation and bring in quality in the Commonwealth.

I was honestly dismayed with the original version of HB1596 because it weakened what we fought hard for. There has been a lot of harm done by unqualified interpreters before the license law was implemented. I agree there needs to be a provision to enable a "new" interpreter who just completed a training program. There must be parameters as to what assignments an inexperienced interpreter can handle. I do not want to see them in any life altering situations where full, accurate and clear communication is needed. The proposed amendment solves my dilemma.

I have worked with many student interpreters doing their practicum interpreting on/for me over last 25 years at Rosemont College's Faculty meetings. I have seen all different levels of skills from the student interpreter coming out of those programs and have given feedbacks and ASL signs for concepts they did not know or whatever. Most common problem is weakness in 'spoken' vocabulary and even more so in ASL sign vocabulary. To give you an example: in academic setting the word 'discipline' comes up very often. It means a specific subject/study field or track and the interpreter would very often erroneously sign 'punishment' or 'control' (here is where I give feedback and most job situations do not have this). They need to go out in real world with this provisional license and perform with some supervision and with this they will get feedback and learn from it and broaden their vocabulary (both spoken and ASL sign) thus become better for it. Also learn how to deal with various situations on the 'job' (not all are ideal and pleasant). I hope ODHH will be given the discretion of monitoring this situation and have the authority to modify requirements as needed to maintain quality. A neutral evaluation of the provisional licensee should be by ODHH or RID not by the training program that trained that person or by the people that hires the interpreter.

I do want to see ODHH in control of this provisional license program. Reason being that its staff is in close contact with stakeholders (interpreters, deaf community, educators, involved with PA TRS, ERCHL, etc.). They are most qualified to modify requirements as needed to maintain quality. So more funding is needed to hire necessary staff to monitor the provisional license program. They have had no budgetary increases for several years despite increases in cost of living as well as increases in demand for services. If they are to be asked to assume more responsibility and authority to monitor various circumstances affecting the quality of life of the Commonwealth's deaf and hard of hearing people, then funding needs to be allocated to do the job. Otherwise, who will enforce the regulations, work with establishments to improve interpreting services, maintain a list of certified interpreters, etc., etc., etc.

There are many more interpreters in the state who feel for whatever reason they do not need license to work. I hope they find it more difficult to find interpreting assignments due to not being on the licensed list. The current shortage of qualified interpreters should lessen over time. Please give the law time to work.

Thank you for allowing me to comment on HB 1596. If possible I would like to have a copy of the proceedings of this meeting.

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