

Representative Cody Horlacher and members,
Assembly Committee on Regulatory Licensing Reform
Room 214 North
State Capitol
PO Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

1 June 2017

RE: AB370

Dear Representative Horlacher and members of the Committee,

The Wisconsin Governor's Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing would like to invite a dialogue with you regarding the work of the Committee. Specifically, the inclusion of American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters in the proposed bill overlooks subtle but key differences between the services delivered by these professionals and those by other categories of credentialed license holders also included in the bill. These key differences establish ASL Interpreters in a separate category than other service providers mentioned the bill, and for this reason we would respectfully request removal of ASL interpreters from this bill.

Accurate ASL Interpreters provide a service which allows individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind to function as members of the workforce and as citizens by allowing them to participate in education, voting, and legal, medical/treatment services and civil matters. For example, ASL interpreters are the bridge to access communication in college classes, emergency situations and facilitate communications in the courtroom, and medical/treatment creating equal footing to citizens who can hear. Unqualified interpreters are a risk and can have real implications for the lives of individuals who cannot hear. Licensure provides a level of assurance that those engaging in Interpreting meet core competencies, and practice according to ethical standards. In fact, licensure of ASL Interpreters protects the safety of the public and raises the standards of the profession, two of the key purposes of professional licensure statutes. The practical licensure reform proposed, while sensible in the context of optional services (such as manicurist), presents a risk to the professional, educational, social and civil well-being of individuals who require ASL Interpreter services.

The members of the Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing depend on licensed American Sign Language Interpreters to conduct the business of the Council and to meet the Council's charge from the Governor to advise him and the Department of Health Services about issues and concerns affecting to more than 500,000 individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind Wisconsinites. We'd like to invite members of the Committee to attend one of the Council's 2017 meetings to discuss these concerns in detail as well as to hear input on the value of—and even potential improvements to—the licensure of American Sign Language Interpreters in the State of Wisconsin.

Thanks for your time; we recognize that the proposed reform has generated significant attention and possibly even controversy, and we welcome the opportunity to partner with you to examine the issue of license reform in this context.

We hope to hear from you by the end of June 2017, and that you can join us at our meeting on September 15th or December 8th, 2017. Mason Aumanstal (MasonE.Aumanstal@dhs.wisconsin.gov) can assist in coordinating if you are able to join us.

Warm Regards,

Lisa D. Woods (woods.lisa@gmail.com)

And members: Governor's Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing