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## OLR Bill Analysis

### sHB 6932

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STATE INTERPRETING STANDARDS BOARD.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill establishes the Interpreting Standards Board to set education, training, and certification requirements for interpreters for people who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing. The board's duties also include reviewing complaints on interpreters who are not complying with qualification standards and other requirements.

Current law generally requires interpreters (1) to register with the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) and (2) hold at least one of nine sets of credentials described in state law to meet the general credential requirement for interpreters. The bill eliminates this list and instead requires interpreters to hold recognized national or state interpreter credentials the board determines acceptable for interpreting purposes where appropriate in the state.

The bill also specifies that ADS's Bureau of Services for Persons Who are Deaf, Deafblind, or Hard of Hearing is responsible for certain tasks related to interpreter credential and registration, rather than ADS, including receiving interpreter registrations. The bill allows the bureau, in consultation with the board, to issue a qualified candidate an acceptable credential equivalent or a waiver of up to three years from requirements on interpreter registration and credentials.

Lastly, the bill delays, from January 1 to September 1, 2025, the annual report deadline for the Advisory Board for Persons who are Deaf, Deafblind, or Hard of Hearing. The bill removes a provision that limits the report's contents on the advisory board's activities to those conducted in the previous calendar year.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2025, except provisions establishing

the board and delaying the reporting requirement take effect July 1, 2025.

### **INTERPRETING STANDARDS BOARD**

The bill establishes the Interpreting Standards Board within ADS's Bureau of Services for Persons who are Deaf, Deafblind or Hard of Hearing. The bill authorizes ADS to adopt regulations to implement these provisions.

#### ***Board Appointments***

The bureau director must appoint the board by October 1, 2025. The bill requires the bureau director to appoint nine members, six of whom must reflect the state's geographic and racial diversity, as follows:

1. the Connecticut Association of the Deaf president, or designee;
2. the Connecticut Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (CRID) president, or designee;
3. the DeafBlind Association of Connecticut president, or designee;
4. one deaf interpreter professional representative;
5. one hearing interpreter professional representative; and
6. four consumers of interpreting services, one each representing consumers who are hearing, deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing.

#### ***Board Member Qualifications and Terms***

The bill requires the appointed interpreter professionals and consumers to have been state residents for at least three years and have at least three years of experience providing or using interpreting services and interacting with people who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing. They must also have familiarity with interpreting issues and professional interpreter standards. For interpreter professionals appointed to the board, the bill gives priority to those who have been certified or registered interpreters involved in delivering interpreting services for deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing people for at least three years.

The bill establishes staggered terms for appointed members by requiring the bureau director to initially appoint two interpreter professionals and two consumers to a three-year term and the other two consumers to a two-year term. After initial terms, the bureau director must appoint six of the nine board members for two-year terms on a staggered basis.

The bill requires board members to elect a chairperson and other officers as they deem advisable at their first meeting, which they must hold by November 1, 2025. The bill requires the board to meet quarterly on alternate months from scheduled meetings of the Advisory Board for Persons Who are Deaf, Deafblind, or Hard of Hearing.

### ***Board Duties***

The bill requires the board to do the following:

1. establish education, training, and certification requirements for interpreters working in special settings, including community, educational, legal, and medical settings, for the bureau and ADS to use when issuing annual interpreter registration cards;
2. establish operational standards for organizations and providers supplying interpreting services in these settings;
3. expand, in consultation with the bureau director, interpreter access to educational, training, internship, apprenticeship, mentorship, and credentialing opportunities and promote access to opportunities to grow the pool of interpreters in the state;
4. receive and review all complaints on noncompliance with interpreter qualifications requirements (see below); and
5. make recommendations to the ADS commissioner on regulations and legislation on interpreter qualifications.

### **INTERPRETER REGISTRATION**

Current law requires anyone providing interpreting services to register annually with ADS. The bill specifies that they must instead

register with ADS's Bureau of Services for Persons Who are Deaf, Deafblind, or Hard of Hearing. The bill correspondingly requires the bureau, rather than ADS, to prescribe registration forms, issue interpreter identification cards, and maintain a current listing on ADS's website. The bill requires the bureau, rather than ADS, to issue annual identification cards listing the types of settings in which the registrant is qualified to interpret. The bill allows the bureau, rather than ADS, to require documentation of a registrant's training hours, in consultation with the Interpreting Standards Board.

### **INTERPRETER QUALIFICATIONS**

Current law generally requires anyone providing interpreting services in the state to register, hold recognized national or state interpreter credentials, and meet one of nine separate pathways or combinations of credentials that satisfy requirements in the state to provide interpreting services in general (community) settings. These include certification from national organizations, specific types of credentials for certain types of interpreting (e.g., cued speech transliterating), and credentials from Massachusetts.

The bill eliminates these nine options and instead requires anyone providing interpreter services in the state to register with the bureau (instead of ADS) and hold recognized national or state interpreter credentials as the board determines.

Existing law, unchanged by the bill, sets additional required qualifications to interpret in legal and medical settings. As above, the bill requires interpreters working in these settings to register with ADS's bureau, rather than ADS.

### **CREDENTIAL SUBSTITUTES, EQUIVALENTS, AND WAIVERS**

The bill allows interpreters and interpreter registration card applicants who hold different certificates or credentials from recognized national and state interpreter credentialing organizations to apply to the standards board for an approved acceptable credential equivalent or substitute, or a waiver for up to three years from complying with state interpreting standards, as the board determines. After reviewing an

application for a credential equivalent, the bill allows the board to recommend to the bureau a substitute credential or waiver and a determination of any qualified settings in which the applicant may work.

The bill allows the bureau, in consultation with the standards board, to issue a qualified candidate an acceptable credential equivalent or a waiver for up to three years from the state's registration and credential requirements. Under the bill, interpreters who receive an acceptable credential equivalent or a waiver are exempt from registration requirements.

### **COMPLAINTS**

The bill requires the board to receive and review all complaints on noncompliance with interpreter qualification requirements. The board must forward complaints it substantiates on willful or fraudulent misrepresentation of credentials (a Class C misdemeanor under existing law) to the local police department in the community where the interpreter permanently resides, if it is in the state, and the two national interpreter registries. The bill requires the board to notify the ADS commissioner, the bureau director, and CRID about these complaints.

Under the bill, when the board receives a complaint, it must review the complaint and, if it deems necessary, schedule a hearing in a setting open to the public and in keeping with the Uniform Administrative Procedure Act. The bill allows the bureau director to suspend the state registration of anyone accused in a complaint for up to 90 days while the complaint is investigated. The bill requires the board to give written notice to the person or entity accused of violating state interpreter standards laws at least 30 days before holding a hearing.

If the standards board determines that an interpreter has violated a national or state professional interpreter certifying body's interpreter code of professional conduct, the bill requires the board to file a report with the body and the person who received services at the time of the alleged violation.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Related Bill***

sSB 1158, favorably reported by the Human Services Committee, establishes a Department on Aging and renames ADS as the “Department of Disability Services.”

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 22      Nay 0      (03/18/2025)