
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6932 (as amended by House "A")*

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 establishing the training needed to provide interpreting services to select populations and investigating complaints about interpreters who are not complying with state interpreting standards.

The bill specifies that the Bureau of Services for Persons Who are Deaf, Deafblind or Hard of Hearing (within the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS)) is responsible for certain tasks related to interpreter credentialing and registration, rather than ADS, including receiving interpreter registrations. Under the bill, interpreters who receive a waiver or acceptable credential equivalent from ADS are exempt from registration and related requirements.

The bill delays, from January 1 to September 1, 2025, the annual reporting deadline for the Advisory Board for Persons who are Deaf, Deafblind, or Hard of Hearing. It also (1) removes a provision that limits the report's contents on the advisory board's activities to those from the previous calendar year and (2) specifies that the advisory board's recommendations on public policy and legislative changes needed to address gaps in service include interpreting services for people who are non-English-speaking. By law, the advisory board must refer complaints concerning interpreters to Disability Rights Connecticut. The bill additionally requires it to report the complaints to the Interpreting Standards Board.

Both the bill and existing law's provisions on interpreting define

interpreting as a way to translate or transliterate English concepts to a language concept used by a person who is deaf, deafblind, of hard of hearing, or translating a deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing person's language to English concepts through the use of American Sign Language, English-based sign language, cued speech, and oral transliterating. The bill replaces a reference to information received tactually with protactile language and tactile language for people who are deafblind. It also adds the use of non-English-based language for non-English-speaking people to the definition of interpreting.

Lastly, the bill makes minor, technical, and conforming changes.

*House Amendment "A" (1) requires the ADS commissioner, rather than the bureau director, to appoint the standards board; (2) expands the interpreting definition; (3) requires ADS to implement new interpreter standards based on the standards board's recommendations by March 1, 2027; (4) removes provisions from the underlying bill establishing a different complaint procedure; and (5) makes other minor and technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2025, except provisions establishing the Interpreting Standards Board and changing advisory board reporting requirements 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.

Board Appointments

The ADS commissioner, in consultation with the bureau director, must appoint the board by October 1, 2025. She must 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 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' experience providing or using interpreting services and interacting with people who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing. They must also be familiar with interpreting issues and professional interpreter standards. For the appointed interpreter professionals, 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. And each interpreter professional must be trained in providing services in a different special setting (e.g., community, educational, legal, and medical settings).

The bill establishes staggered terms for appointed members by requiring the ADS commissioner 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 commissioner 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 board must meet at least quarterly.

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;
2. establish training needed to provide interpreting services to select populations (e.g., protactile language and tactile language interpreting training to serve deafblind people and training in interpreting methods to serve people who do not speak English);
3. establish operational standards for organizations and providers supplying interpreting services in these settings and to select populations (e.g., deafblind people);
4. 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;
5. receive and review all complaints on noncompliance with state interpreting standards and file associated reports (see below); and
6. make recommendations to the ADS commissioner by January 1, 2027, on new interpreter standards, 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 instead register with ADS's Bureau of Services for Persons Who are Deaf, Deafblind or Hard of Hearing. It correspondingly requires the bureau, rather than ADS, to prescribe registration forms, issue interpreter identification cards, and maintain a current interpreter listing on ADS's website, categorized by the settings for which they are qualified and by specialized skills (e.g., protactile language or tactile language interpreting for deafblind people, or interpreting for non-English-speaking people). 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. It allows the bureau, rather than ADS, to require documentation of a registrant's training hours, in consultation with the Interpreting Standards Board.

NEW INTERPRETER STANDARDS

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 certain requirements to provide interpreting services in general (community) settings, with separate requirements for medical and legal settings. The bill requires the ADS commissioner to implement policies and procedures, by March 1, 2027, that incorporate new interpreter standards based on the Interpreting Standards Board's recommendations. It sunsets current law's requirements when these new standards are adopted.

The bill requires the commissioner to implement these policies and procedures before adopting regulations, as authorized under the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act, by March 1, 2027. She must post notice of the department's intent to adopt the regulations on the eRegulations system within 20 days after implementing the policies and procedures and prominently link to them on the ADS website. Under the bill, the policies and procedures are valid until final regulations are adopted. The bill requires the commissioner to submit the policies and procedures in proposed regulation form to the Legislative Regulation Review Committee within 12 months after publishing the department's notice of intent.

The bill exempts interpreters who are interpreting for deafblind people from existing requirements until these new standards are adopted or until a state or national standard is established for protactile language or tactile language interpreting.

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 a review of whether an approved acceptable credential equivalent or substitute, or a waiver for up to three years from complying with state interpreting standards, may be granted. After reviewing an application for a credential equivalent, the bill allows the board to recommend to ADS a substitute credential or waiver and a determination of any qualified settings in which the applicant may work. The ADS commissioner may grant a substitute credential or waiver in her discretion.

The bill exempts from registration requirements any interpreter with an acceptable credential equivalent or waiver from the law's requirements from ADS in accordance with the Interpreting Standards Board's recommendations.

COMPLAINTS

The bill requires the board to investigate complaints about noncompliance with state interpreting standards. It requires the board to file reports with:

1. Disability Rights Connecticut for all substantiated complaints;
2. the American Association for the DeafBlind, for substantiated complaints involving interpreters for deafblind people; and
3. a national or state professional interpreter certifying organization, if the board determines an interpreter violated the organization's interpreter code of professional conduct.

BACKGROUND

Legislative History

The House referred the bill (File 460) to the Appropriations Committee, which reported out a substitute (File 912) that removed a provision eliminating the requirement that interpreters hold at least one of nine sets of credentials described in state law to meet the general interpreter credentialing requirement.

Related Bill

sSB 1158 (File 153), 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)

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 42 Nay 8 (05/05/2025)