

# Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** HB-5487 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION  
WORKING GROUP AND INCREASING STATE ASSISTANCE FOR PERSONS

**Title:** WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED AND DEAF.

**Vote Date:** 3/19/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/10/2026

**File No.:** 431

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Human Services Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

The bill establishes a three-year pilot program to create a career pipeline for American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting by funding select high school courses eligible for college credit and requiring partnerships with higher education institutions. It also increases the annual state funding cap for community inclusion services for individuals who are both blind or visually impaired and deaf from \$10,000 to \$14,000 per person. The bill aims to address the shortage of qualified ASL interpreters, expand access to specialized services, and improve communication, independence, and community integration for individuals with hearing and vision related disabilities.

## **SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):**

LCO 3458 replaces sections 1 and 2 with working group on ASL education options.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

**Connecticut Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity (CWCSEO), Melvette Hill, Executive Director:** supports this bill as a workforce development and accessibility initiative. The Commission emphasized that the ASL interpreter shortage creates barriers to healthcare, education, and employment, and that the proposed pilot program would help build a long-term pipeline by introducing students to interpreting careers early. CWCSEO also supported increased investment in community inclusion services, highlighting their role in reducing social isolation and promoting full participation for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or visually impaired.

**Department of Aging and Disability Services ADS), Amy Porter, Commissioner:** ADS expressed support for the intent of addressing ASL interpreter shortages but raises concerns about implementation feasibility due to the limited number of qualified ASL teachers and interpreters in Connecticut. ADS noted that workforce shortages may hinder the effectiveness of the proposed pilot program and suggested that strengthening teacher standards and training pipelines may be a necessary first step. ADS supported the proposed increase in funding for community inclusion services for individuals who are deafblind but cautioned that raising the per-person cap could reduce the number of individuals served given existing funding constraints and interpreter shortages.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA):** CHA expressed support emphasizing the significant shortage of qualified ASL interpreters in Connecticut particularly in healthcare settings where demand is high and interpreter availability is limited. CHA supports the bills pilot program as a way to build a workforce pipeline by developing ASL skills and cultural competency early. Increased interpreter availability would improve access, communication, and health equity for individuals who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing.

**Communication Advocacy Network (CAN), Edward Peltier, Board Member:** Expressed support in increasing the Community Inclusion Grant cap for deafblind individuals noting that the current \$10,000 limit has not increased with inflation and rising service costs. He emphasized that the increase would expand access to critical support such as transportation, communication assistance, and social engagement. Testimony also indicated the cap increase could be implemented without additional overall funding due to existing underutilization of contract funds.

**ASL Task Force and Governor's Advisory Board for Deaf, DBD and HOH, John Board, Chair ASL Task Force:** Supports the bill and highlighted the serve shortage of ASL teachers in Connecticut, noting only 3 ASLTA certified teachers statewide, which threatens the sustainability of the ASL interpreter pipeline. Emphasized that the bill addresses the workforce crisis by creating realistic certification pathways for native signers and interpreters, establishing dual enrollment and apprenticeship opportunities, and interagency coordination, framing ASL education as both a human services and workforce development priority.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Anonymous (2):** opposes due to the increase in government spending by expanding benefits, eligibility, insurance mandates or state programs, and decreases affordability for taxpayers.

**Anonymous:** opposes bill.

**Reported by: Jolie Rodriguez**

**Date: March 31, 2026**