



General Assembly

February Session, 2026

Raised Bill No. 5487

LCO No. 2637



Referred to Committee on HUMAN SERVICES

Introduced by:
(HS)

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A CAREER PIPELINE PROGRAM FOR AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING AND INCREASING STATE ASSISTANCE FOR PERSONS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED AND DEAF.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

- 1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) The Commissioner of
2 Education shall establish a three-year pilot program to promote a career
3 pipeline for American Sign Language interpreting by providing not
4 more than five local or regional school districts with funding for related
5 high school courses eligible for college credit.
- 6 (b) The commissioner shall prescribe application requirements for the
7 pilot program and annual reporting requirements for school districts
8 selected for the program. A school district selected for the program shall
9 sign a memorandum of understanding with an accredited institution of
10 higher education to provide credit from such institution for program
11 courses.
- 12 (c) Instruction offered under the pilot program may include, but need
13 not be limited to, vocabulary development, grammar and syntax under

14 American Sign Language, knowledge of the deaf community,
15 conversational proficiency and advanced communication skills
16 appropriate to course level and aligned with state guidance and
17 recognized professional standards.

18 (d) For the duration of the pilot program, the commissioner shall file
19 an annual report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of
20 the general statutes, not later than January fifteenth with the joint
21 standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of
22 matters relating to education and human services. The report shall
23 include, but need not be limited to, the number of students taking
24 courses in the program and their average proficiency levels in American
25 Sign Language.

26 Sec. 2. (*Effective July 1, 2026*) The sum of one million dollars is
27 appropriated to the state Department of Education from the General
28 Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, for the pilot program
29 established pursuant to section 1 of this act.

30 Sec. 3. Subsection (d) of section 17a-812 of the general statutes is
31 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
32 *2026*):

33 (d) The Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services may expend
34 up to [ten] fourteen thousand dollars per fiscal year per person twenty-
35 one years of age or older who is both blind or visually impaired and
36 deaf, in addition to any other expenditures for such person, for the
37 purpose of providing community inclusion services through specialized
38 public and private entities from which such person can benefit. The
39 commissioner may determine the criteria by which a person is eligible
40 to receive specialized services and may adopt regulations necessary to
41 carry out the provisions of this subsection. For purposes of this
42 subsection, "community inclusion services" means the assistance
43 provided to persons with disabilities to enable them to connect with
44 their peers without disabilities and with the community at large.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	17a-812(d)

Statement of Purpose:

To establish an American Sign Language career pipeline program and increase annual amounts spent on specialized services for persons who are blind or visually impaired and deaf.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]