



State Board of Sign Language Interpreters Board Meeting

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

6:00-8:00 p.m.

Via Zoom

In Attendance

Board Members

Susan Beaver, Community Member
Shane Feldman, Maryland Association of Deaf
Jacob Leffler, Community Member and Board Vice Chair
Trudy Suggs, Community Member and Board Chair
Kaylee Teixeira, Potomac Chapter Registry for the Deaf

Governor's Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GODHH)

Katherine Breen, Policy Manager
Usherla DeBerry, Acting Director
Laura Lugar, Executive Assistant
Payal Sharmacharya, Communications and Policy Manager

Others:

Krystal Quinlan, Assistant Attorney General (Absent)
Gavin Gobble Baker, April Jackson Woodard, Maria Solovky, and Anna Rose, Interpreters
Community members (non-participating; viewers only)

The meeting was called to order by Chair Trudy Suggs at 6:20 p.m.

Old Business

Chair Suggs discussed the current board composition, sharing that the board is still awaiting the Governor's Office of Appointments to announce the selection for the DeafBlind seat vacancy. Additionally, Dr. Pamela Collins tendered her resignation due to overlapping commitments; she continues to be very supportive of board activities. GODHH has submitted a name to replace Dr. Collins' seat. Both appointments will be announced as soon as we hear from the state.

The board has also voted for Trudy Suggs to serve as chair and Jacob Leffler as vice chair. Arrangements are being made for an hour-long ethics training for the entire board via Zoom; more details will be provided when they are available.

New Business

The board agreed to have our town hall meeting, open to the public, on April 10, 2024, in Columbia, Maryland. GODHH will handle the logistics.

The board reviewed the bylaws, with special gratitude to Katherine Breen for her hard work on the draft.

Jacob Leffler moved to approve the bylaws as read. Kaylee Teixeira seconded. PASSED.

Work Group Report: Vice Chair Jacob Leffler

Leffler reported that as vice chair, he will focus solely on the work groups. So far, there have been five work groups established: businesses/agencies, DeafBlind, education (k-12), health care/mental health, legal, and video remote interpreting. The board has sent out letters to various entities both on the state and national level to collect information for each work group to apply towards the regulations, and have gotten a number of responses to date.

Regulations Timeline

Suggs shared a tentative timeline and reminded the board that the regulations draft must be submitted to the state by April 1, 2024. After going through the appropriate channels as listed in the timeline, the regulations will be published in the *Maryland Register* on July 1, 2024. July 1 is also when people may begin applying for licensure, and then on January 1, 2025, ODHH will begin granting licenses to qualified applicants. There will also be time for people to submit feedback on the regulations during May 2024. Suggs also emphasized that the board is community-centered and wants to hear from the community. The board is interested in hearing from all sides of the issues.

Katherine Breen clarified that GODHH will handle all the logistics, such as the application process, while the board will oversee the process and determine whether an interpreter qualifies for licensure or not. The board is also responsible for escalated issues and grievances. Suggs encouraged the board to review the regulations folder in the shared drive and share input. The board also welcomes community members' participation in any of the workgroups.

Public Comments

The board received two public comments for tonight's board meeting. The first question asked when interpreters can begin applying for licensure. They can begin applying on July 1, 2024, although licenses will be granted beginning January 1, 2025. All interpreters wanting to work January 1, 2025 or later must submit their applications before then. There will also be a provisional option; the goal of this law is not to push out interpreters, but rather to ensure quality assurance.

The second question asked, "How does the board plan to support educational interpreters through the licensure process? Educational interpreters are currently not mentioned in the law and are concerned because the most commonly used credential—the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) — has not been included." The SBSLI education work group is led by board member and educational interpreter Susan Beaver. Beaver responded that the work group has done a lot of research and discussion on what to include in the regulations for educational interpreters, including reaching out to the National Association of Interpreters in Education and the people behind the EIPA, Boys Town. The board is also grateful to Beth Ann Monn and Renee Gordon, Maryland's new NAIE representative. Feldman added that while we are reviewing the EIPA, we are also aware that the NAIE is considering developing its own certification in the future. Any and all information will be shared with the community via various means, including the ODHH website and social media platforms.

PCRID Representative Report: Kaylee Teixeira

Teixeira, along with Dr. Collins, attended the Potomac Chapter of RID meeting on February 25, 2024, and answered people's questions about the law. Many were not aware of its existence. She also shared information on the upcoming town hall meeting and on our process.

Community Resources

Suggs shared that the board should start considering how we can invest in the interpreting and deaf communities in terms of the law and its requirements. One idea is to develop a fact sheet with key information; another is to develop resources for people to prepare for the licensing process so that it can be as seamless as possible.

DeBerry emphasized that GODHH wants to work with different entities to ensure people are earning their certifications, since certification comes before licensure in Maryland. The board will partner with GODHH in working on this once regulations are in place.

Town Hall Meeting

The regulations will be released by April 3rd for the community so that they can review it prior to the April 10th town hall meeting. The attorney general's office requires that all questions and public comments be submitted prior to the town hall meeting, so anyone wanting to ask questions or share input can submit it by emailing gov.odhh@maryland.gov at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. The board is required to have a minimum of two town hall meetings a year, but the board agreed that there should be at least four this year in different parts of the state.

The next board meeting will be on March 28, 2024 at 6:00-8:00 p.m., and it will be held virtually once again.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:39 p.m.