



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 7, 2019**

**HB 7230, An Act Concerning Interpreter Standards And Improving Access To
Public Spaces For Deaf, Deaf-Blind And Hard Of Hearing Persons**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 7230, An Act Concerning Interpreter Standards And Improving Access To Public Spaces For Deaf, Deaf-Blind And Hard Of Hearing Persons**. CHA has concerns with HB 7230.

Before commenting on the bill, it's important to point out that Connecticut hospitals and health systems provide high quality care for everyone, regardless of their ability to pay. They do more than treat illness and injury. They build a healthier Connecticut by improving community health, managing chronic illness, expanding access to primary care, preparing for emergencies, and addressing social determinants of health. By investing in the future of Connecticut's hospitals, we will strengthen our healthcare system and our economy, put communities to work, and deliver affordable care that Connecticut families deserve.

This bill aims to strengthen and standardize the requirements concerning the qualifications of interpreters serving deaf and hard of hearing persons. CHA and our member hospitals continually support efforts to enhance the skills of qualified interpreters; however, the proposals outlined in HB 7230 remain extremely premature when considering the current landscape - which would instead yield an immediate and significant decrease to an already limited interpreter pool serving the deaf and hard of hearing population in Connecticut. This shortage of available resources is not just unique to the state of Connecticut, as there remains a national shortage of available in-person interpreters as well, with no indication of an upturn any time soon.

Furthermore, to the detriment of all deaf and hard of hearing persons, an even smaller portion of that limited pool of interpreters, both locally and nationally, is willing to serve healthcare organizations due to the unpredictable hours and demands that come with serving in these types of settings. Many in healthcare, including hospitals, must supplement this limited pool with interpreters who can service Connecticut remotely – something that many provisions in this bill would appear to make more difficult.

And so, CHA is greatly concerned that by adding these requirements at this time, for which there is no evidence to demonstrate any improvement to the quality of available interpreters, will only serve to exacerbate an already tenuous set of circumstances. For these reasons, it is imperative not to give what limited qualified interpreters we currently have reasons to seek work elsewhere, in places where requirements are less burdensome.

Additionally, Section 2(e) proposes establishing an Interpreting Standards Board with wide authority to recommend sanctions be assessed by the Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services. These sanctions could include penalties against entities and organizations - including courts, schools, and hospitals - for which the Department of Rehabilitation Services has no direct oversight authority or control. The proposed Interpreting Standards Board does not have representation from any organization that the Commissioner could sanction. And so, CHA strenuously objects to this extraordinary delegation of authority and lack of necessary and appropriate stakeholder involvement.

Ideally, aspects of some of the provisions made in this bill may someday be achievable and truly benefit deaf and hard of hearing patients. However, in the context of the current climate with scant available resources, this bill would negatively impact deaf and hard of hearing patients rather than serve them. If HB 7230 passes as written, it may result directly in deaf and hard of hearing persons having fewer interpreters available to them.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.