

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

RS24957

Relating to sign language interpreting, this legislation creates a licensing system and licensing requirements for sign language interpreters. At least 13% of the general population has a variety of types of hearing loss, which affects 203,785 Idaho citizens. Out of that total, 2.42% of the population with hearing loss (34,486) experience severe to profound hearing loss. They are unable to readily understand speech due to the extent of their hearing loss, but instead rely on a visual mode of communication. These deaf people are at a distinct disadvantage with incomplete, incorrect, and unethically-delivered information, often by the hands of non-qualified interpreters. A professional and qualified interpreter is required to facilitate the communication and information, ensuring that it is fully accessible and understandable by the customers and the service providers. It is a quality control measure to ensure that deaf and hearing consumers receive appropriate interpreting services, which may reduce general threats to the health and safety of deaf people statewide. Licensing professional interpreters also minimize the liability of hiring entities in providing services to deaf consumers. It also ensures equal access to education, employment opportunities, and health care for deaf children and adults.

Recognizing that by using sign language interpreters can profoundly affect the lives of people of the state of Idaho, it is the purpose of this act to set standards of qualification for those who engage in the practice of sign language interpreting and protect the public from unprofessional conduct in the practice of sign language interpreting.

FISCAL NOTE

Because covered entities already provide sign language interpreting services, there will be no impact to state or local funds. Entities that employ sign language interpreters may elect or decline to assume license fees for their employees. Sign language interpreters have several credentialing examinations available and therefore do not need the state to administer a licensing exam.

Based on an estimated 100 licensees being added to the existing Speech and Hearing Services Licensure Board, the impact on the Bureau of Occupational Licenses dedicated fund would be approximately \$12,500 in additional revenue. These fees would cover the additional costs to the Board for the on-going costs associated with licensure of sign language interpreters.

(Please note: This is based on the current fee of \$125. If the Board's proposed fee reduction passes, revenue would be \$10,000 based on the new fee of \$100)

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DISCLAIMER: This statement of purpose and fiscal note are a mere attachment to this bill and prepared by a proponent of the bill. It is neither intended as an expression of legislative intent nor intended for any use outside of the legislative process, including judicial review (Joint Rule 18).