

# **Interpreter Licensure in Minnesota**

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**THANKS TO...**

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**MADC President  
John Fechter**

**MRID President  
Tarra Grammenos**

**for their leadership!**

**THANKS TO...**

**MINNESOTA COMMISSION OF THE DEAF,  
DEAFBLIND AND HARD OF HEARING**

**FOR PROVIDING INTERPRETING  
SERVICES!**

**THANKS TO...**

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**ASLIS**

**or providing live-streaming  
services and staff!**



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**THANKS TO.... MDS**

**for giving space for us to use!**



# TOWN HALL RULES

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- 1. One person at a time to share thoughts**
- 2. Come up to stage please when called**
- 3. Introduce yourself first**
- 4. Respect other people's opinions**
- 5. Stay on topic of interpreter licensure**

# WHY ARE WE HERE?

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**Deaf/HOH/DeafBlind/Deaf+ and Interpreters need each other**

**We have trust issues now**

- 1. Certification issues**
- 2. Qualification issues**
- 3. Ethics issues**
- 4. Agency issues**

**Must work together to resolve**

# LICENSURE - YES OR NO?

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Licensure is one option,  
can fix many problems but not all problems  
NAD recommends licensure and will work  
with states to help if community wants it

NAD does not decide for you; **ONLY YOU  
CAN DECIDE** (Interpreters and Deaf, both)

Need to explore PROs and CONs

# RESPONSE

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- 1. Any licensure bill usually can only pass when it has support from most of the affected population (deaf and interpreters)**
- 2. Not good to have conflicting bills, need a consensus bill**
- 3. Do we need a licensure bill? Need to examine problems and solutions to decide**
- 4. Can compare with other states' experiences**

# ILLINOIS EXPERIENCE

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- 1. Many failures with licensure bill attempts**
- 2. IAD & IRID & EFE joined to host town halls**
- 3. Researched facts - state registry data**
- 4. Community collaborated on licensure bill**
- 5. Feedback shared with legislators**
- 6. Licensure bill passed!**

# **FLAWS IN SOME STATE LAWS**

- 1. Many states have great licensure laws but there are always flaws that need to be fixed from time to time**
- 2. Example: one state required all interpreters to be certified to get licensed, including out of town interpreters who come to work at conferences**
- 3. Challenge? Only one licensed interpreter was trained in DeafBlind interpreting and not available for a DeafBlind person attending a conference**

## **LESSON LEARNED?**

- 1. Difficult to design a perfect licensure law**
- 2. Best to draft a very simple licensure bill, put the complex parts in regulations not law**
- 3. Agency/Commission can change regulations easily, while law is hard to change**
- 4. Agency/Commission can have an Interpreter Board that includes representatives from interpreting and deaf community to help decide the regulations**

# LAW

VS

# REGULATION

1. Establish licensure
2. Who can license?
3. No practice without
4. Power to regulate
5. Power to collect fees
6. Power to punish
7. Establish board
8. Parallel other licenses

1. Who qualifies for licensure? CEUs?
2. How qualify?  
Levels?
3. Amount of fees
4. Makeup of Board
5. Exceptions?
6. Incorporate Ethics

# **BUT NEED LICENSURE??**

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- 1. Anyone can call themselves an interpreter (South Africa, Florida, etc)**
- 2. No requirement for certification**
- 3. No legal mandate for ethics**
- 4. De-certification does not stop bad actors**
- 5. Service providers have no clue who is qualified**
- 6. Good agencies can filter out bad ones, but what about bad agencies and bad freelancers?**

# **IT'S A NUMBERS GAME**

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- 1. If there are significant numbers of uncertified interpreters, no ethical constraints even with agency vetting**
- 2. All professions are licensed and regulated**
- 3. Interpreters work with licensed professionals and should have equal responsibility/ethics**
- 4. Need to design licensure to address different needs of Metro areas versus rural areas**

# **THE DATA SO FAR...**

## **MRID/MADC SURVEY (as of 9/27/19)**

**450 TOTAL (414 ASL/English; 36 Deaf)**

**318 Certified ASL/English Interpreters (77%)**

**96 Non-Certified ASL/English Interpreters  
(23%)**

**12 Certified Deaf Interpreters (33%)**

**24 Non-Certified Deaf Interpreters (66%)**

# THE DATA SO FAR...

## One Agency:

**447 in Metro**

**311 Certified (70%)**

**130 Non-Certified & 6 Lapsed (30%)**

**203 in Greater MN**

**145 Certified (71%)**

**53 Non-Certified & 5 Lapsed (29%)**

**792 ALL (including out of state and unknown)**

**560 Certified (71%)**

**232 Non-Certified & Lapsed (29%)**

## **THE DATA SO FAR...**

### **Another Agency:**

**409 RID Certified (with 6 Lapsed)**

**5 BEI Certified**

**≥ 50 EIPA**

**≥ 75 Non-Certified (with goal of certification)**

**≤ 50 Non-Certified Deaf (with no cert plans)**

# POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

1. Interpreters need to earn money
2. Certification tests are expensive
3. Past certification tests have inherent bias
4. Not all forms of interpreting have certification (DeafBlind, tri-lingual, medical, etc)
5. Licensure on top of certification=additional \$
6. License fees need to be reasonable
7. However, licensure limits supply and therefore rates can go up to cover the extra cost

# **FINAL WORDS BEFORE Q&A**

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- 1. You decide the interpreter licensure issue**
- 2. Need consensus on issue and details**
- 3. Status quo is not good; need positive change**
- 4. Tonight is first step towards some consensus**
- 5. Probably not solve all problems tonight  
Important to have ongoing dialogue**

# Q & A Discussion

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