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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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***"WE ARE COMMITTED TO ENSURING SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS ARE HELD TO A HIGHER STANDARD"***

The Wisconsin Association of the Deaf and Wisconsin Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf are launching an awareness campaign to engage community members and legislators about the Interpreter Licensure Bill. The bill was drafted as a result of several years of coordinated community efforts that evaluated the current law and areas of improvement. The proposed changes are uniquely designed to protect consumers of interpreting services and establish clear pathways to working as a professional interpreter in Wisconsin.

"Our elected representatives need to be held accountable to support access to effective communication services for all constituents who rely on sign language interpreters. Each day we delay in moving this bill forward, more people will suffer because of unqualified interpreters working in high risk settings," said Katy Schmidt, President of Wisconsin Association of the Deaf.

"Licensure is key to protecting consumers from fraud or substandard skills in very critical situations such as education, employment, medical, and legal settings" said Stephanie Zito, Chair of Interpreter Licensure Committee and WisRID member. "A majority of interpreters and consumers support the licensure bill. Legislators have a real opportunity to solve the interpreter crisis in Wisconsin and lead the nation with a model licensure bill."

The proposed licensure bill would repeal and replace the current Wisconsin license for sign language interpreters that was passed in 2010. The current license no longer reflects the evolution of a growing profession and proposed updates model best practices for sign language interpreters. Since 2010, the field of sign language interpretation has increased its expectations of practitioners to obtain knowledge and techniques acquired through formal study. This includes a set of language processing skills, ethical decision making skills, and breadth/depth of technical knowledge. Using national standards for interpreters, the proposed licensure model appropriately places interpreters in categories based on education, training, and skill level.

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