

Stephanie Zito <stephanie.t.zito@gmail.com>

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AM

To: Carrie Molke <Carrie.Molke@dhs.wisconsin.gov>
Cc: WisRID President <president@wisrid.org>, "Mullett, Amber K - DHS" <Amber.Mullett@dhs.wisconsin.gov>, "Malcore, Jennifer L - DHS" <JenniferL.Malcore@dhs.wisconsin.gov>, "Seemeyer, Linda J - DHS" <Linda.Seemeyer@dhs.wisconsin.gov>, Legislative Committee <legislative@wisdeaf.org>, Katy Schmidt <president@wisdeaf.org>, "board@wisrid.org" <board@wisrid.org>, Jon Brostoff <jonathan.brostoff@legis.wi.gov>, "Frank, Rebecca" <Rebecca.Frank@legis.wisconsin.gov>

Ms. Molke,

I appreciate your response in regards the concerns lifted by the Wisconsin Association of the Deaf (WAD) and Wisconsin Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (WisRID) which need to be addressed. As the current Interpreter Licensure Committee Chairperson, I feel compelled to write you about my experiences during the past year with ODHH in hopes to open dialogue about ODHH's perspective on interpreter licensure.

You may or may not be aware of the work that has transpired over the past year and a half after the Deaf/Interpreting communities came together in response to several changes happening in the interpreting field. We wanted to take the opportunity to review the current licensure law to identify areas of weakness and prioritize them. At the end of 2015, WisRID and WAD established the Sign Language Interpreter Taskforce (SLIT) which was comprised of deaf, hearing, and interpreter community representatives. Their work involved gathering feedback from consumers, professionals, agency owners, and other important stakeholders, then creating recommendations to reflect both the needs of the interpreting profession as well as consumers. SLIT concluded their work by providing their recommendations to the WAD and WisRID Boards on necessary updates to the licensure law.

The boards carefully considered the feedback and decided to establish a Joint Legislative Committee at the end of 2016. The Interpreter Licensure Committee was instituted and charged with the task of drafting an updated licensure bill. Much of our time went into doing research on state-by-state comparisons of interpreter licensure, investigating potential models of general professional licensure, and reviewing the recommendations from SLIT. I invite you to review the work of both the SLIT and the Interpreter Licensure Committee on the following webpage: <http://wisrid.org/legislative/interpreterlicensure.html>

Since January, the Interpreter Licensure Committee has met with many stakeholder groups, including ODHH representatives, about the drafting process and to gather additional feedback. During the most recent meeting on August 16, 2017, DHS/ODHH made an argument that ODHH had not been "involved in the process" and further clarification is needed on the reasoning behind that statement. ODHH began their involvement in 2015 at the National RID Conference where staff member Amber Mullett approached myself (then WisRID Vice President) and Christina Destrampe (WisRID President) about bringing the BEI to Wisconsin in response to the RID certification/testing moratorium. ODHH was also involved with the SLIT and presented at several of their meetings. **I have personally met with ODHH and have communicated with staff members since January about the objectives of the draft bill and that we are open to their input.** Our committee has gone so far as to incorporate their feedback in regards to ODHH/DHS's current and **only** role in the licensure law which is providing an interpreting skill evaluation. If you would like further

details about the correspondences between ODHH and WAD/WisRID/Interpreter Licensure Committee specifically about the BEI and licensure, please do let me know and I can share that information with you.

During the same meeting, statements were also made questioning the validity of why the community was seeking an updated law. **The community would not have pursued efforts to drafting a the law if we had not gathered sufficient evidence that weaknesses exist and need improvement.** This process took almost a full year through the SLIT. Additionally, the Interpreter Licensure Committee would not have continued our charge if our survey on the model license and potential draft items were overwhelmingly opposed by stakeholders.

What efforts have been made by ODHH/DHS over the past several years to reach out to the community for input on the interpreter licensure law? Can ODHH/DHS provide any evidence based on deaf/hard-of-hearing/deafblind, hearing, and interpreting stakeholder perspectives as to why they feel we should not move forward with the bill? Since ODHH/DHS staff are not elected officials and do not represent the community on such issues, that leads to the conclusion that ODHH has either developed these opinions on their own or they have neglected to inform us of the community feedback they have gathered that would support their comments.

On a final note, ODHH/DHS also mentioned during the recent meeting they had concerns with the bill. The Interpreter Licensure Committee, WAD, and WisRID have yet to receive any feedback or communication from ODHH about their concerns. My hope is that ODHH/DHS staff are willing to continue the dialogue about this important issue of interpreter licensure. The Interpreter Licensure Committee welcomes the conversation so that we can understand ODHH/DHS's specific concerns as well as the root cause on their resistance to the updated law in general. I can be reached at stephanie.t.zito@gmail.com or [\(262\)818-0881](tel:(262)818-0881). We look forward to meeting with your staff members in the near future.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Zito, M.S., NIC
Interpreter Licensure Committee Chair
WisRID/WAD Joint Legislative Committee
Email: stephanie.t.zito@gmail.com
Phone (Voice/Text): [262-818-0881](tel:262-818-0881)