

It is imperative that access to mental health services be provided to Deaf and hard-of-hearing people in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner. This means the use of qualified mental health interpreters or Deaf mental health providers to meet these needs. If such services are not made accessible, there is a great risk of misdiagnosis, inability to provide successful treatment, and lack of client-therapist rapport, which could lead to further suffering or even death on the part of the Deaf or hard-of-hearing patient. There is also an increased liability on the part of the practitioner by not making their services culturally and linguistically appropriate. Health care providers have a duty to first do no harm, and this is the most basic step they can take to do so. I have served as a professional, certified, sign language interpreter for over 30 years with 12 of those years working almost exclusively in mental health settings. Passage of this bill is of critical importance.