

Kara Crumrine

Derry, NH

HB525- Oppose

To members of the House Executive Departments and Administration,

Good morning and thank you to the members of this committee for hearing the testimonies given today from NH citizens and entities in which HB525 will greatly affect.

My name is Kara Crumrine, I am a 2019 graduate of the UNH-Manchester ASL/English Interpreting program, currently a coordinator for the Education and Resource Center at Northeast Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, and a practicing ASL/English Interpreter holding this state's licensure since 2021. I reside in Derry.

I join many of my colleagues and community members in opposition of HB525.

As many have or will speak about today, I want to stress the importance of recognizing the distinct differences between the two entities named and considered for administrative transfer in this bill.

The Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services--currently governed by the Department of Education's Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation--is vital to Deaf, DeafBlind, Deaf Disabled and Hard of Hearing NH residents for its direct services and outreach that provide unique and unequivocal assistance and training to members of the community.

The NH Interpreter Licensure Board reviews licensure applications, grants licenses, and implements oversight to ensure compliance with professional standards and regulations.

Aside from the proximal relation of their housing and the minimal administrative support from ODHHS to NHILB, they are distinct entities with distinct responsibilities and outcomes, and to conflate their existence for the purposes of this bill is a gross oversight that risks inferior successes and productivity within the communities they serve.

There are Deaf persons here today that will provide testimony representing the desideratum of ODHHS remaining under the auspices of DOE/VR. I implore to this committee to consider the lived experiences, nuanced understanding, and integrity of these testimonies that will mirror the skilled, expert, and industrious professionals laboring under the current ODHHS.

As a trained and working interpreter, I will instead use my time to highlight large concern for the NHILB being moved to the Office of Professional Licensure and Certification. NH is one of 22 US states that require interpreters to hold an occupational license. Receiving this license is not a nominal feat. We must obtain at minimum, four years of interpreter training including over 300 hours of practicum experience, matriculate a degree, pass either NH's interpreter State Screening or the national governing body's certification, pay testing, application and licensing fees and maintain continuing education credits thereafter. NH Interpreters committing to this process of obtaining licensure command the presence and execution of a proficient, informed, and well versed licensing board to safeguard our professional standards.

Of utmost importance is the understanding that Deaf charge and guidance must be at the helm of this oversight. This is a significant factor when considering the need for managing, investigating and mediating grievances in this occupation, a current NHILB duty proposed to be struck from this bill. The medium of our professional work, the foundation and root of our practice is the linguistic fluency of American Sign Language and allied cultural competency of a marginalized people. The US has a systemic history of oppression of Deaf people and suppression of ASL. We must continue to be lead by Deaf individuals who are uniquely equipped to mitigate, investigate, and mediate potential injustices intended or not that risk harm to this community, lest we repeat the past. If moving this board to under the auspices of OPLC renders this duty absent, then practicality and morality must kill this bill.

This committee might hear or argue support for this bill as it relates to the fallacious claim that OPLC will bring greater “legitimacy” to this profession. This claim is ego driven and at the expense of the Deaf Community that our allyship must remain. A principal that is rightfully instilled in any interpreter from the beginning of our training. Our profession is valid and profound by its nature. Communication access is the right of Deaf people under the ADA and federal law and a prominent necessity used in NH every day. If governing of our licensure and practice, under OPLC, cannot be guaranteed by a uniquely competent, highly qualified, various, Deaf-led board- the risk of damages, lawsuits and harm is imminent.

NHILB was designed to improve the quality of the interpreting profession in NH. It currently operates under a department with a vast depth of established institutional knowledge. It continues to demonstrate a refined understanding of our Code of Professional Conduct, American Sign Language, the many interpreter credentials, and Deaf Culture. There is explicable doubt that the integrity of these functions can persist under OPLC. If you hear and/or share this reasonable concern, I ask that you vote Inexpedient to Legislate. Thank you.