



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Sign Language Interpreter Bill Passes Both Houses of the Legislature *Legislation Represents Progress for Deaf Community, Interpreters*

**Madison** – Wisconsin sign language interpreters and those who use their services have reason to celebrate this week. Assembly Bill 250 (AB 250), a bi-partisan bill authored by Senators Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point) and LaTonya Johnson (D-Milwaukee) and Representatives Ken Skowronski (R-Franklin) and Jonathan Brostoff (D-Milwaukee) passed both houses of the legislature, and now needs only the Governor’s signature to become law.

“AB 250 is an example of the best legislation that can be accomplished through bipartisan work in the state legislature,” said Rep. Brostoff. “The passage of this bill is an important step forward for Deaf rights in our state.” The sign language interpreter profession has experienced strain over the last four years due to a moratorium on the Registry for Interpreters for the Deaf examination. Under current law, entry level interpreters may renew their licenses twice before taking this test to advance. If they don’t advance, they must leave the profession. This has caused the loss of over 100 sign language interpreters – people who could get their jobs back if AB 250 is signed.

“Passage of AB 250 is a tremendous victory for the Deaf and Interpreting communities,” said Rep. Skowronski. “This bill will bring jobs to Wisconsin and help get jobs back to those whose licenses have expired.”

AB 250 makes entry level licenses indefinitely renewable, and statutorily allows the introduction of other examinations in the state. It transitions the Sign Language Interpreter Advisory Council to the Sign Language Interpreter Advisory Committee, and establishes criteria for advanced and intermediate licensure levels for the hearing and the deaf.

“For those of us who have the use of all five senses, it’s hard to imagine how the inability to hear would change how we communicate, and how much we would come to count on another person – an interpreter – to share our thoughts, ideas, emotions, and needs with the broader world,” said Sen. Testin “The changes in this bill will ensure that Deaf Community’s voice won’t be silenced.”

“We owe it to Wisconsinites who rely on sign language interpretation to protect their health, assert their civil rights, and to otherwise meaningfully engage in society to provide clear and effective licensing and enforcement for those who wish to provide these professional services,” added Sen. LaTonya Johnson. “AB 250 will advance the profession, provide safeguards for consumers in high risk settings, and ensure a voice for members of the deaf community in determining how their interpreters will be regulated in the future.”

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