

## **Bill Introduced in Michigan to Require Use of Qualified Interpreters**

Rep. John Gleason has finally introduced a long-promised bill that would require the courts, police, schools, colleges, hospitals, doctor offices, banks, credit unions, employer and lawyers required to provide accommodations to employ qualified sign language interpreters under rules promulgated by the Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The Michigan House bill number, HB 6087, introduced on May 18, 2006, may be the most important bill DODHH has been asking for years. It will have a very positive impact on the interpreters providing effective communication resulting equal access for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf/Blind adults and children who use interpreter services as well as the general public.

### **What does the bill do?**

It amends the existing Deaf Person Interpreter Act of 1982 that covers the courts and administrative hearings only. It expands to cover educational institutions, medical providers, financial institutions, legal arenas, employer and state and local governments. It defines "qualified sign language and oral interpreter. It adds Deaf/Blind person to definitions. It authorizes DODHH to promulgate administrative rules covering requirements for certification, testing, application fees, and application and grievance procedures. An interpreter who engages in interpreting without qualifications will be punished by imprisonment for not more than 93 days or a fine not more than \$10,000 and not less than \$1,000, or both. An appointing authority who appoints an unqualified interpreter shall be punished by a fine not more than \$10,000 and not less than \$1,000. For a copy of bill, go to [www.michiganlegislature.org](http://www.michiganlegislature.org) and enter 6087 in bill search number box.

Why this bill? Michigan Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf/Blind adults and children have experienced negative consequences from using non-qualified interpreters provided to them over the years. The state/local governments and public accommodations who provide interpreters as required by state and federal laws must hire qualified interpreters under this proposed law. The legislation will hopefully increase recognition of interpreters as the professional service providers when this bill becomes law. Michigan will join with the growing number of states with interpreter licensure/standards legislation. For list of states, see [www.rid.org/lic.html](http://www.rid.org/lic.html).

Like all bills in the Michigan House and Senate, the bill will die on December 31, 2006 if there is no action on it. It is important that you express your thoughts to your local representative and senator soon. To find a representative, look up in [www.house.mi.gov](http://www.house.mi.gov) and [www.senate.mi.gov](http://www.senate.mi.gov) by entering your zip code.

If you have any question, contact Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing at toll free number 877-499-6232 voice or TTY or [dodhh@michigan.gov](mailto:dodhh@michigan.gov).

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