

Second Regular Session
Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO

PREAMENDED

*This Unofficial Version Includes Committee
Amendments Not Yet Adopted on Second Reading*

LLS NO. 26-0417.02 Jennifer Berman x3286

HOUSE BILL 26-1109

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Stewart K. and Joseph,

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

(None),

House Committees

Health & Human Services
Finance

Senate Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING THE COMMISSION OF A STUDY TO DETERMINE IF**
102 **ADDITIONAL CONSUMER PROTECTIONS ARE NEEDED FOR THE**
103 **DEAF, HARD OF HEARING, AND DEAFBLIND COMMUNITY WITH**
104 **RESPECT TO SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION SERVICES**
105 **PROVIDED IN THE STATE.**

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov>.)

The bill requires the executive director of the department of human services (executive director), in collaboration with the division for the

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.

deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind (division), to enter into a contract with a third-party researcher to study whether additional consumer protections for the deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind community, with respect to using sign language interpreters, are needed in the state. The executive director and third-party researcher shall enter into the contract on or before July 1, 2027, and the third-party researcher shall report its findings and conclusions to the executive director and the division on or before July 1, 2028.

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 26-21-106, **amend**
3 (1)(f) and (1)(g); and **add** (1)(h) and (10) as follows:

4 **26-21-106. Division for the deaf, hard of hearing, and**
5 **deafblind - creation - powers, functions, and duties - programs -**
6 **report - rules - definitions - repeal.**

7 (1) The division for the deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind is
8 created in the communication services for people with disabilities
9 enterprise. The powers, functions, and duties of the division include:

10 (f) Approving a sign language interpreter's certifications as valid
11 and reliable in accordance with section 6-1-707 (1)(e)(I)(B); ~~and~~

12 (g) Coordinating the provision of a telecommunications relay
13 service program for individuals in the state who are deaf, hard of hearing,
14 or deafblind or speech-disabled. In doing so, this service shall:

15 (I) Conform with section 401 of the federal "Americans with
16 Disabilities Act of 1990", 47 U.S.C. sec. 225, including the provision for
17 state application to the federal communications commission for
18 certification; AND

19 (II) Meet or exceed all operational, technical, and functional
20 minimum standards in federal communications commission regulations
21 governing telecommunication relay services under 47 CFR 64 subpart F

1 and 47 CFR 9 subpart E; AND

2 (h) COORDINATING WITH THE THIRD-PARTY RESEARCHER
3 CONTRACTED BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION
4 (10) OF THIS SECTION TO STUDY WHETHER ADDITIONAL CONSUMER
5 PROTECTIONS FOR THE DEAF, HARD OF HEARING, AND DEAFBLIND
6 COMMUNITY WITH RESPECT TO USING SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER
7 SERVICES ARE NEEDED IN THE STATE.

8 (10) (a) ON OR BEFORE JULY 1, 2027, THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
9 IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DIVISION, SHALL ENTER INTO A CONTRACT
10 WITH A THIRD-PARTY RESEARCHER TO CONDUCT A STUDY REGARDING
11 CONSUMER PROTECTIONS FOR THE DEAF, HARD OF HEARING, AND
12 DEAFBLIND COMMUNITY WITH RESPECT TO USING SIGN LANGUAGE
13 INTERPRETERS IN THE STATE. THE THIRD-PARTY RESEARCHER SHALL
14 COORDINATE WITH THE DIVISION REGARDING THE REQUIRED PARAMETERS
15 OF THE STUDY, WHICH REQUIRED PARAMETERS MUST INCLUDE:

16 (I) INTERVIEWS:

17 (A) WITH SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS IN THE STATE;

18 (B) WITH MEMBERS OF THE DEAF, HARD OF HEARING, AND
19 DEAFBLIND COMMUNITY WHO HAVE WORKED WITH SIGN LANGUAGE
20 INTERPRETERS REGARDING THEIR EXPERIENCE AS CONSUMERS OF SIGN
21 LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION;

22 (C) WITH LANGUAGE SERVICE COMPANIES;

23 (D) THAT ARE MADE FULLY ACCESSIBLE TO THE INTERVIEWEES,
24 INCLUDING ACCESS TO CERTIFIED AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE
25 INTERPRETERS. INTERVIEWERS SHALL HAVE PROFICIENT KNOWLEDGE OF
26 DEAF CULTURE AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS WITH MEMBERS OF THE
27 DEAF, HARD OF HEARING, AND DEAFBLIND COMMUNITY.

1 (E) TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, WITH INTERVIEWEES WHO ARE
2 REPRESENTATIVE OF A RANGE OF AGES, RACIAL AND ETHNIC
3 BACKGROUNDS, SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS, RURAL AND URBAN
4 AREAS, CULTURALLY DEAF AND LATE-DEAFENED INDIVIDUALS, AND
5 CONSUMERS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCE RECEIVING BOTH CERTIFIED AND
6 UNCERTIFIED IN-PERSON AND REMOTE VIDEO SIGN LANGUAGE
7 INTERPRETATION SERVICES;

8 (II) COLLECTION OF QUALITATIVE DATA:

9 (A) ABOUT WHETHER THE UNREGULATED PRACTICE OF SIGN
10 LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION CLEARLY HARMS OR ENDANGERS THE
11 HEALTH, SAFETY, OR WELFARE OF THE PUBLIC, AS CONSIDERED BY THE
12 DEPARTMENT OF REGULATORY AGENCIES WHEN ENGAGING IN ITS SUNRISE
13 REVIEW PROCESS PURSUANT TO SECTION 24-34-104.1 (4); AND

14 (B) THAT MAY BE RELEVANT TO OTHER FACTORS THAT THE
15 DEPARTMENT OF REGULATORY AGENCIES CONSIDERS PURSUANT TO
16 SECTION 24-34-104.1 (4) WHEN ENGAGING IN ITS SUNRISE REVIEW
17 PROCESS;

18 (III) INFORMATION ABOUT THE CURRENT STATE OF THE
19 PROFESSION, INCLUDING ANY CHANGES IN THE PROFESSION OVER THE LAST
20 DECADE; AND

21 (IV) COMPARATIVE RESEARCH REGARDING OTHER STATES'
22 REGULATION OF THE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION PROFESSION,
23 INCLUDING A REVIEW OF REGULATION BY AT LEAST ONE STATE WITH:

24 (A) LONG-STANDING REGULATION OF THE PROFESSION;

25 (B) RECENTLY ENACTED REGULATION OF THE PROFESSION; AND

26 (C) RECENTLY MODIFIED REGULATION OF THE PROFESSION.

27 (b) ON OR BEFORE JULY 1, 2028, THE THIRD-PARTY RESEARCHER

1 CONDUCTING THE STUDY SHALL PREPARE A FINAL REPORT OF THEIR
2 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS, INCLUDING ANY RECOMMENDATIONS
3 REGARDING REGULATION OF SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS, AND SUBMIT
4 THE REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND THE DIVISION.

5 (c) THIS SUBSECTION (10) AND SUBSECTION (1)(h) OF THIS SECTION
6 ARE REPEALED, EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 1, 2029.

7 **SECTION 2. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act
8 takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the
9 ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly (August
10 12, 2026, if adjournment sine die is on May 13, 2026); except that, if a
11 referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the
12 state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this act
13 within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take effect
14 unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in
15 November 2026 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the
16 official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.