

Hi,

I reviewed the recorded session and noticed that some of the messages I conveyed were not interpreted correctly. I would like to take the opportunity to correct them as follows:

1. The legislature should automatically provide accommodations (ASL interpreting, Communication Access Realtime Translation, and Assistive Listening devices) for all sessions that directly affect Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind (DHHDB) constituents. For other sessions that do not target DHHDB communities, DHHDB constituents can make an online request for accommodation.
2. In Massachusetts, DHHDB constituents are always the first to testify if a legislative session takes all day and covers a wide variety of bills. It will save some money.
3. Not all Deaf people need captioning because English is not their first language. Some are monolingual (meaning that ASL is the only language they speak) and some are bilingual, but ASL is their native language. They will need an ASL interpreting service. It is important that we do not assume that just because they are bilingual (ASL-English) means they could read captioning with ease. ASL and English are two completely different languages (not to mention that both employ different modalities - aural/oral/written v. visual/manual) and that affects how one cognitively processes received information.

Lastly, I want to take advantage of the teachable moment about our interpreters yesterday. One of the interpreters did not convey some of my points accurately, as I have indicated earlier, and also struggled at one point when she tried to interpret your question. Unfortunately, this does happen often due to several reasons. One is qualification such as language proficiency. Two is the level of knowledge/familiarity with lived Deaf experiences and political contexts. Three is how well one knows Deaf individuals. It is important to keep those factors in mind and to anticipate some errors. You may ask why can't we just get highly qualified interpreters. That is one big issue in VT because we have a very small pool of interpreters. Those highly qualified interpreters are always unavailable.

Thank you for your time to read this and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

John