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Testimony of Libby Stone-Sterling, Director, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
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Before the
Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services

In support of L.D. 2087 "An Act to Amend the Laws Governing the Licensure of
American Sign Language Interpreters "

January 28, 2026

Good morning, Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services. My name is Libby Stone-Sterling and I am the Director of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services in the Maine Department of Labor. I am here to testify in support of L.D. 2087, An Act to Amend the Laws Governing the Licensure of American Sign Language Interpreters. The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services works to provide full access to employment, independence, and community integration for people with disabilities. Through the Bureau's Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened and Vocational Rehabilitation programs – nearly 1200 Deaf and Hard of Hearing jobseekers are supported each year on a path to meaningful employment. For many of these individuals, access to ASL interpreter services is a prerequisite to participation in education, training, and employment support services.

The terrible events in Lewiston in October 2023, raised awareness of the critical importance of language access in an emergency and more broadly shined a spotlight on the lack of access to American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters across Maine. In response, The Department of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with the Departments of Professional and Financial Regulation, Education and Labor, commissioned the comprehensive "Transforming Interpreting Maine (TIME) Report",

which was released in June 2025. The Report was developed with significant input from the Deaf community, ASL interpreters, and other important stakeholders and through its recommendations, identified opportunities for Maine to strengthen access to ASL Interpreters. Barriers identified in the TIME Report included that current degree requirements create unnecessary barriers for qualified interpreters while not directly correlating to interpreting competency.

In addition to critical changes to provide an exemption for ASL interpreter licensure during emergencies, LD 2087 proposes changes that would broaden the pathway to licensure and, in doing so, expand the pool of potential ASL interpreter candidates. The Maine Department of Labor recognizes the importance of expanded career pathways and is working closely with its Maine Apprenticeship Program to explore opportunities to establish a Registered Apprenticeship program for ASL interpreters. These efforts will complement the licensing changes in this bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this information. I am available to attend the work session if that would be helpful.