

**Minutes of the Quarterly Board Meeting of the Arizona Commission for the Deaf
and the Hard of Hearing.**

Meeting held May 21st, 2026 at 4:30pm.

**Meeting was held remotely via Zoom and posted to the agency
YouTube page.**

Call to Order & Roll Call

Commissioner Bolmarcich called the meeting to order at **4:32 PM**

Commissioners present via Zoom: Commissioner Kidd, Commissioner Madsen, Commissioner Mackey, Commissioner Sherk, Commissioner Swenson (in at 4:37 PM), Commissioner Bolmarcich, Commissioner Tallman, Commissioner Staples, Commissioner Thompson (in at 4:33 PM)

Commissioners absent: Venkatesh, Tenin

Staff Present via Zoom: Nikki Soukup, Lillian Gilmer, Victoria Vaughn, Ricky Gonsowski, Chyla Dalton-Nava

AAG: Elise Phalen

Approval of Minutes- Previous meetings

Interim Chair Bolmarcich opened the meeting asking the board to vote on the approval of meeting minutes from the following previous meetings: November 6th, 2025, December 3rd, 2025, December 4th, 2025, January 28th, 2026, and April 6th, 2026. **Commissioner Goodstein moves to approve the meeting minutes en bloc; Commissioners Kidd and Swenson seconds, the motion carried unanimously.**

Chair's Report

Interim Chair Bolmarcich continued with the next agenda item, her report to the Board, announcing her role as Interim Chair, stepping in for Catherine Sienko whose term had expired. She noted that the Commission will hold formal elections for the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary during the upcoming August meeting. She then took some time to honor outgoing members. Catherine Sienko reflected on her nine-year tenure and the mentorship she received, while Fred Williams thanked the staff and fellow commissioners for the opportunity to serve the hearing loss community. It was also noted that Commissioner Scarborough has departed, with Commissioner Madsen stepping in to represent the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (ASDB).

The Interim Chair then welcomed a new cohort of commissioners, most of whom introduced themselves and shared their backgrounds. The new members include Kristen Mackey, the new DES representative; Ron Tallman, who is representing the hard of hearing community; Peggy Staples, representing the hard of hearing community and Joshua Sherk, a career educator representing the

Deaf community. While Caryn Tenin was announced as the new DeafBlind representative, her formal introduction was deferred to the next meeting due to her absence.

Executive Director's Report

Nikki Soukup opened her report by expressing gratitude for her permanent appointment on February 14th and recognizing the contributions of outgoing Commissioners Sienko, Williams, and Scarborough. She also welcomed the newly appointed representatives from the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind communities, alongside new representatives from DES and ASDB. Using a bamboo analogy, she described the current phase of the agency as a period of "root growth," focusing on strengthening the organization's foundation through internal reorganization and collaboration to ensure long-term resilience and flexibility. As the agency nears the end of fiscal year 2026 on June 30th, leadership is currently finalizing strategic objectives and preparing for the start of fiscal year 2027. This transition involves a heavy focus on performance cycles, metrics, and the creation of new goals. The Director also highlighted several staffing updates, including the promotions of Reena Banerjee and Ashley Martin, the addition of Jael Garcia to the Business Operations Unit, and the ongoing recruitment of a Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy. Looking ahead, the agency remains dedicated to advancing communication access, interpreter licensure, workforce development, and specialized services for the DeafBlind and hard of hearing communities. The report concluded with a preview of the upcoming ACDHH Tour, which is set to launch in August, with more specific details to be shared later in the meeting agenda.

Public Comments

Lisa Carbone provided written comments on the complaint filed against her.

Interpreter Complaints

Regarding Audrey Evans: The board reviewed two separate complaints stemming from a single April 2024 incident involving interpreter Audrey Evans and her peer, Ashley Martin, during a DeafBlind forum. The allegations, filed by both Martin and an observer, Carmen Smith, claimed that Evans physically pushed Martin while switching positions during the assignment. While the Interpreter Licensing Committee (ILC) initially recommended that Evans complete two hours of continuing education regarding team interpreting for Smith's complaint, they recommended dismissing Martin's specific filing. During the board discussion, several members raised concerns about the consistency of these outcomes and the significant time lapse since the incident occurred. Commissioner Swenson highlighted that Evans had already issued an immediate apology to those involved, suggesting that a dismissal would be more equitable. Ultimately, Commissioner Kidd moved to dismiss both complaints, citing the two-year delay and the fact that an apology had been made, arguing that further disciplinary action or mandated education was no longer appropriate.

Commissioner Kidd moved to dismiss the complaints filed against Audrey Evans; Commissioner Sherk seconded, the motion carried unanimously.

Regarding Linda Bove: Commissioner Swenson gave a summary on the complaint filed by hearing interpreter Kaitlyn Brauch against Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) Linda Bove, alleging unprofessional and uncivil conduct during an assignment. While the Interpreter Licensing Committee (ILC) initially proposed a dismissal due to the "he said/she said" nature of the claims and the significant time lapse since the incident, Commissioner Swenson suggested reconsidering a requirement for two hours of team-interpreting workshops, noting that the allegations described a very uncomfortable working environment. This sparked a debate regarding the appropriateness of imposing requirements when the facts are objectively difficult to verify. Commissioner Thompson echoed the sentiment that the situation was "sticky" and lacked a clear path forward, while Commissioner Goodstein argued against mandated workshops, suggesting instead that the relevant agencies simply avoid pairing the two interpreters in the future. **Commissioner Sherk moved to dismiss the complaints filed against Linda Bove; Commissioner Kidd seconded the motion, the vote proceeded by roll call with commissioners voting as follows:**

Bolmarcich:Aye

Goodstein: Aye

Kidd: Aye

Mackey:Aye

Madsen: Aye

Sherk:Aye

Staples: Aye

Swenson: Nay

Tallman:Aye

Thompson: Nay

The motion carries with Commissioners Swenson and Thompson voting in opposition.

Regarding Alvina Malcolm: Commissioner Swenson gave a summary of the complaint against Alvina Malcolm regarding her admission that she worked without a valid Arizona general interpreter license for 46 days following its expiration in April 2024. While the board considered options such as a formal letter of reprimand, the Interpreter Licensing Committee (ILC) ultimately recommended dismissing the case. This recommendation, moved by Commissioner Thompson and seconded by Commissioner Sienko, was based on the fact that the lapse appeared to be a paperwork oversight and the specific locations of the unauthorized work were unknown. Furthermore, it was noted that Malcolm is not currently licensed in Arizona, as her most recent renewal application was denied in

September 2025 for being incomplete. **Commissioner Kidd moved to dismiss the complaints filed against Alvina Malcom; Commissioner Swenson seconded, the motion carried unanimously.**

Regarding Lisa Carbone:

Commissioner Swenson gave a summary on the complaint against Lisa Carbone concerning allegations that she provided services to Arizona consumers during a period when her license had lapsed, specifically between June and September 2024. Although the board deliberated on several disciplinary responses—including a formal letter of reprimand, a monetary fine, or mandated workshop hours—they ultimately decided against these measures. A motion was carried to recommend a full dismissal of the complaint to the Board, concluding the matter without administrative penalty. **Commissioner Swenson moved to dismiss the complaints filed against Lisa Carbone; Commissioner Kidd seconded, the motion carried unanimously.**

Regarding Brynn Hickey:

Commissioner Swenson gave a summary on the complaint against Brynn Hickey, who admitted to working for 300 days after her Arizona interpreter license expired, explaining that the state had "fell off the radar" while she managed ten different licenses for her remote work. Despite an inquiry into her employer, it could not be confirmed whether any of her assignments during those 300 days actually involved Arizona residents. This lack of evidence led to a debate among the board; Commissioner Sherk questioned why the company could not provide specific data, while the Commission's attorney, Elise Phalen, clarified that the agency has no legal authority over interpreting companies, only individual licensees. Ultimately, citing the inability to prove that any unlicensed work occurred within the state's jurisdiction, the board followed the ILC's recommendation to dismiss the case. **Commissioner Tallman moved to dismiss the complaints filed against Brynn Hickey; Commissioner Staples seconded, the motion carried unanimously.**

Regarding Aaron Johnson:

Commissioner Swenson gave a summary on the complaint filed against interpreter Aaron Johnson, who was accused of arriving at work smelling strongly of alcohol on multiple occasions in early 2025. The allegations were supported by a corroborating witness and an admission from Mr. Johnson that he had been drinking heavily the night before an early morning assignment, leading the investigator to conclude he had violated professional conduct standards. While the Interpreter Licensing Committee (ILC) originally considered a letter of concern due to his license nearly expiring, they ultimately recommended a formal letter of reprimand and suggested that he undergo relevant training or utilize resources like Alcoholics Anonymous. Recent updates as of February 2026 confirmed that Mr. Johnson's license remains active, prompting the board to consider additional disciplinary actions, such as civil penalties, alongside the recommended reprimand and rehabilitation support.

Commissioner Kidd moved to enter Executive session for legal advice in this case; Commissioner Thompson seconds the motion, the board enters executive session at 5:31 PM. The board returned from executive session at 5:49 PM. Quorum was confirmed by roll call, with Commissioner Mackey exiting the meeting at 5:49 PM.

The Commission engaged in a vigorous debate regarding the disciplinary action for Aaron Johnson after learning his license had remained active, which expanded the Board's options to include fines, suspension, or revocation. Commissioner Staples and several others expressed serious concern over the potential for harm to clients and the professional community, with Staples and Goodstein advocating for a license suspension rather than a simple reprimand. While Commissioner Kidd initially suggested a three-month suspension and a \$500 fine to emphasize the gravity of the offense, some members, including Commissioner Tallman and Commissioner Swenson, worried that the combination of a fine and a long suspension might be overly punitive for a first offense, especially if it impacted the interpreter's primary livelihood. After considering various durations for the suspension—ranging from 90 days down to a one-month "lesson learned" period—Commissioner Goodstein formally moved for a 30-day suspension to balance the need for professional accountability with the circumstances of the case.

Commissioner Goodstein moved to suspend Aaron Johnson's Arizona licence for 30 days; Commissioner Kidd seconded, the vote proceeded by roll call with commissioners voting as follows:

Bolmarcich:Aye

Goodstein: Aye

Kidd: Aye

Madsen: Aye

Sherk:Aye

Staples: Aye

Swenson: Aye

Tallman:Aye

Thompson: Aye

The motion carries unanimously.

ILC-New Members

The Commission addressed the need for new members on the Interpreter Licensing Committee (ILC), a subcommittee tasked with the preliminary review of interpreter complaints and licensure applications to prevent Board backlogs. Commissioner Swenson explained that the committee typically meets every two months for roughly 90 minutes; however, several prospective volunteers, including Commissioners Kidd and Staples, expressed concerns regarding the current Friday

afternoon meeting schedule. While Staples eventually withdrew her name to wait for more clarity on the time commitment, Commissioners Kidd and Bolmarcich remained interested, provided the schedule could be adjusted via a future poll. Legal counsel Elise Phalen emphasized that new members had to be formally appointed during the current session to ensure the committee could function for its time-sensitive June meeting. **Commissioner Swenson moves to appoint Chair Bolmarcich and Commissioner Kidd to the ILC, Commissioner Thompson seconds the motion, the motion carried unanimously.**

2026 Town Hall Meetings

Executive Director Nikki Soukup announced the launch of the ACDHH community tour, which will feature a series of two-hour regional gatherings beginning in August 2026. These sessions are designed to engage local communities through information sharing, feedback collection, and open discussion on relevant issues, with planned stops in Flagstaff, Tucson, Yuma, and the Phoenix area throughout the remainder of the year. Soukup invited the Board to participate based on their locations and interests, emphasizing the importance of their presence in fostering community engagement. Following the meeting, additional details and specific scheduling updates will be shared with the commissioners via email.

November Meeting Date

The Commission deliberated on the schedule for its final meeting of the year, originally set for November 19th. Executive Director Nikki Soukup explained that the original date conflicted with a national conference for state agencies serving the Deaf and hard of hearing, prompting a proposal to move the meeting to December 3rd. **Commissioner Kidd moves to reschedule the November meeting to December 3rd: Commissioner Tallman seconds, the motion carries unanimously.** Regarding the modality of the meeting—specifically whether it should be in-person, virtual, or hybrid—Commissioner Goodstein suggested remaining flexible to see if the session could align with a community town hall event. Following legal advice that the modality did not need to be decided immediately, the Board agreed to revisit the format during the August agenda, ensuring that a virtual option would remain available for those unable to attend in person.

Future Agenda Items

The Commission concluded the meeting by adding the items for the upcoming August agenda. Commissioner Swenson would like to address the possibility of increasing the number of complaints reviewed during each Interpreter Licensing Committee (ILC) meeting. Commissioner Kidd also requested a dedicated discussion on how ACDHH can better support the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (ASDB) following significant issues impacting the local Deaf community, as well as discussing the current standardized tier of disciplinary guidelines for interpreting complaints. Furthermore, Commissioner Goodstein raised concerns regarding the fairness of public comment

time limits, arguing that the standard three-minute window is often insufficient for those using sign language. He would like to discuss this as it relates to the Arizona Legislature.

Adjournment

Commissioner moved that the meeting be adjourned at 6:37 PM; Commissioner Swenson seconds, the meeting concluded at 6:37 PM.

The undersigned certifies that a copy of the attached notice was duly posted this 27th day of May, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. by Chyla Dalton-Nava, Assistant to the Executive Director.