

February 20, 2023

Chair Representative Dave Pinto
Vice Chair Representative Heather Keeler
Members of the Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee
Chief Author Representative Brian Daniels

RE: HF # 612

It shows incredible progress that this bill is being seen. Progress that minority language communities are being seen and progress that people that have the power to provide access, resources and equity to these communities are doing something!

I work as an ASL interpreter for English/ASL and am also an ally to the Deaf community. On a daily basis I work with individuals who were deprived access to their native language as children. Oftentimes the Hearing person I am interpreting for mistakes the Deaf individual's disfluency as lack of intelligence. Disfluency is a direct result of Deaf children not having access to language, specifically ASL. It is well known that the resources we have access to as children have a lasting impact on our ability to thrive as adults. Deaf children have fallen through the cracks without the explicit language of the law to support them. Language equity is long overdue. Our community, state and nation will be so much stronger with full support and resources given to ALL children.

With gratitude,

Belen Jean Lilley Trujillo Vriezen MSW, NIC
Saint Paul, MN 55104