

This letter is to show support for HF 612.

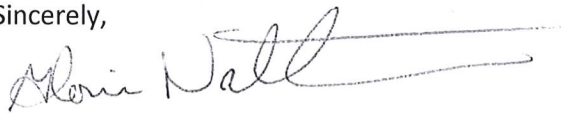
I am an audiologist so I am familiar with the impacts on child's development when they are not provided proper access to language, especially during their critical learning period. I have seen these outcomes in education environments and in the community when they show up with serious but preventable deficits which has life-long repercussions for them. It is heart breaking. National studies on this have even stated that it could be considered equivalent to withholding of food (Gallaudet University VL2). We know withholding food has negative impacts on the body, withholding language has negative impact on the brain. We should give this recognition of an area that has been overlooked by our system. Basically, the standard of ensuring accessible language for every individual has been too long ignored aspect of fundamental well-being as humans and we should now make efforts to correct that and hold each other accountable for that.

United States is a member of the United Nations. United Nations has explicit and multiple statements regarding Human Rights regarding having access to language. (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 2; International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights: ICESR Article 2; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: ICCPR Articles 2, 2, 24; Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action I 19; Declarations on the Rights of the Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities Article 1, 2, 4; Convention on the Rights of the Child; Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity Article 5; and Convention of Rights of People with Disabilities). So, this bill only supports the efforts to bring our own state to the level of accountability expected of us on an international stage. We pride ourselves in being champions of Human Rights so we should commit ourselves in developing safeguards that protects these basic human rights right here.

I have heard concerns that this proposed change to the bill is that it would be used as a punitive measure against parents and be used to deprive people of their choices. These are simply unfounded fears. Our statute around neglect is not used to hunt people down and punish them, it is used to protect those who are vulnerable and provides our community with avenues to intervene if we see it happening and provide support for them and their families. Also, this change does not mandate anything that takes their choice away. If they can show they have supported their child's language access, regardless of which language it is, then they are free to do so. Don't allow yourselves to be swayed by unfounded fears but look at the opportunities this change will allow our state towards protecting the fundamental human rights for those at risk. Another argument I have heard against it is that we do not have a system currently that can respond to this specific area, but I am optimistic that in true Minnesotan spirit, our community and professionals will rally around them and create avenues to minimize those risk and provide the support to those are experiencing it. All it takes is courage to recognize this as an issue that should be addressed.

Thank you for your commitment to our citizens.

Sincerely,



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2/23/23

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