

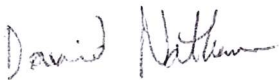
Feb 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

This letter refers to HF612.

I am a member of the Deaf community. I have two Deaf children. I have been advocating for approximately ten years for the ability for deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind children to have access to Deaf Interpreters in schools. My core effort has always been supporting language access for my community. Through my time advocating for my own children and being in the general community I have experienced many things that indicate there is an underlying issue of there being problems regarding language access for people with hearing loss. I have had professionals come to me and ask me to help reach out informally to individuals that they have observed as neglecting their child's needs in terms of providing language access to them to see if I can provide indirect support to them to mitigate the problem of language deprivation. I have had strangers spot me in public places and approach me to ask me to help them advocate for access to language rich environments for their child. I have interacted with many adults who have great intellectual potential but exhibit clear signs of consequences from language deprivation. I know our community does care and want to do better but currently it is relying on a few individuals to do the volunteer work to provide this support for addressing situations of neglect like these. As a professional and as a community volunteer, I feel powerless to help all of these people that I come across because there is no official recognition in our state on this. This oversight has caused a great disservice to and inequity for our citizens. We should do better and I believe through this bill we can make steps towards recognition, accountability, and empowering more people to be able to intervene and prevent these harm.

I ask that you support this bill.



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