

Joy Brewer

From: marikasr@aol.com
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:06 PM
To: Joy Brewer
Subject: Fwd: Leak-K Michigan

-----Original Message-----

From: Tibor Vörösmarty-Blumerick <vorosmarty@yahoo.com>
To: marikasr@aol.com <marikasr@aol.com>
Sent: Tue, Mar 15, 2022 8:41 am
Subject: Leak-K Michigan

You can change and send to her...

Joy Brewer Committee Clerk
joybrewer@house.mi.gov

Dear Representative Brewer:

My name is Marika Vorosmarty-Blumerick and I'm a Deaf 77 year old woman who has lived in Michigan for most of my life.

As a Hungarian-born person who became deaf by a bomb during World War 2, we were able to immigrate to Michigan in the 1950's due to our country's openness to have a Deaf child welcomed. Prior to our arrival in Michigan, my two older sisters were able to attend school in Germany as we lived on a "work camp"; I, however, was able to go to school as they didn't know what to do with the "deaf" girl.

Naturally, I was a curious child and wondered about the world, but it wasn't until we arrive in the "thumb" of Michigan, in Fillion, that I was enrolled into the Michigan School for the Deaf. It was here at the school, that I found my culture, my language (American Sign Language) and my love for life. I was able to thrive and live fully due to the fact that we were all Deaf and could grow, learn and develop in our native language.

Too often those who don't understand who we are and why we are fighting for survival, slash the budgets first for our Deaf schools. Sometimes it is important to remind people that we don't heal everyone with the same medication and we also shouldn't teach everyone with the same methods. A mentally-challenged person is not put in the program with Blind students and Deaf students should not be forced to go to hearing school and read lips.

I beg you to please contact Deaf advocates who can tell you the amount an average Deaf person can get from the lips when lipreading. How can anyone expect someone to learn from those percentages?! Cochlear implants are also an affront to our community because we are constantly forced to view our "Deafness from opposing sides. We (Deafies) don't look at our Deafness as a disability, but rather a cultural condition. If someone looks from the opposing side, then there always those that want to "fix" us. We don't need to be fixed.

I've been able to achieve much in life, not in spite of, but because I am Deaf and proud. We can do it! We just need people to help support our culture and our place in this world and education is one of those first pillars. Help us keep Deaf Schools alive!

I am open for any discussion if you need it and I thank you in advance for your time and attention.

Best regards,

Marika

Here is a little background about myself; I became deaf by a bomb when I was 11 months old escaping my home country of Hungary. After spending time at a work camp in Germany, my family was able to emigrate to America when I was 6 and settle in Michigan. I am a proud graduate from the Michigan School for the Deaf and am currently an active member of the Senior Olympics since 2006 (earning over 275 medals). Family, culture, travel and education are all extremely important to me. I have also been a teacher of ASL at Macomb Community College for over 30 years and was the first Deaf substance abuse counselor in the state and served on the Michigan Board of Mental Health for several terms. I am a co-found of Haven and on the Board of DeafCAN.

Joy Brewer

From: Alexander Abenchuchan <aabenchuchan@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 12:00 PM
To: Joy Brewer
Subject: E-mail in support of HB 5777

Mrs. Joy Brewer,

This is Alex Abenchuchan from Farmington Hills, Michigan. I am writing an email to express my support for HB 5777. A deaf child, by nature of their disability, is at a higher risk of growing up without a strong language foundation. There are many tools and resources out there, but not every deaf child receives them. The bill would ensure that parents are aware of their deaf child's needs and correct any gaps in language development.

Thank you.

- Alex

Both my husband and I are Deaf. My husband Gary was born Deaf and I became Deaf around the age 2 ½ years old from unknown high fever. In the 1950's, there were really no resources and support for parents with a Deaf child. My mother was told by an audiologist to send me to Deaf institution to get an education. I was 4 years old and my mother tried this way and after 3 days she felt it was not right for me and brought me back home. She researched everywhere for schools that had programs for a Deaf child.

My mom contacted Spenser Tracy's wife and she was that there was an oral deaf program near our home. I was enrolled in the program with the explanation that there was no sign language allowed and I would be taught by using the school's speech/oral methods. I remember everything was repetitive speech only, there was no understanding of language development, just learn to talk right. Gary's schooling was the same way. Our parents never had the resources and they felt they had no choice but to send us to Oral school. Our parents thought it would better for us in the hearing world regarding job opportunities.

Both of us went to college. We had no interpreters and only had note takers using carbon paper that they could give us a copy. College was tough. Teachers always told us to "read lips". I am proficient in reading lips, but there are words that look the same and if I miss one or more words, the whole meaning of the sentences or conversation are lost. Reading lips is exhausting on the eyes and the brain cognitively.

After high school, out in the world, I started to make Deaf friends and I learned ASL through them. My mom was worried I would lose my voice if I did not talk because she was told that it would happen. As of today, I still can talk, so the experts were wrong. Interesting!

I was able to have language structure because my mother would work and read with me. I had some knowledge of some language before I became deaf. Gary suffers from language deprivation his whole life. He did not know how to read lips. He would just watch with his eyes and was not allowed to sign. He really did not learn anything in school. He remembers just always being drilled into him speech, then woodshop and gym. Today, Gary still struggles with understanding language. His comprehension of information he sees is often interpreted in a way so that he does understand.

Lead-K is the best thing for parents with Deaf child/children. Everyone would get the best resources and will know what choices to make. Lead-K is crucial and implementing the HB5836 will provide the Deaf children with a better education by using ASL. I wish the parents back had better choices because there were not many choices. Language deprivation is a serious issue for Deaf children and the HB5836 bill will help change this.

Thank you,
Kathy & Gary Derderian

Joy Brewer

From: Ayesha Ghazi <ayesha@detroitdisabilitypower.org>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 11:36 AM
To: Joy Brewer; Rep. Rodney Wakeman (District 94); Rep. Luke Meerman (District 88); Rep. Laurie Pohutsky (District 19); Rep. John R. Roth (District 104); Rep. Daire Rendon (District 103); Rep. Mark Tisdell (District 45); Rep. Darrin Camilleri (District 23); Rep. Brenda Carter (District 29); Rep. Abraham Aiyash (District 4)
Subject: Support HB 5777!

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Your Honorable Representatives of the Families, Children, and Seniors Committee,

My name is Ayesha Ghazi Edwin, and I am the Deputy Director at Detroit Disability Power (DDP). We are a membership organization that builds and leverages the political power of our disability communities in Detroit and across Michigan.

Today, I'm contacting you in full support of the **Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) legislation (HB 5777) regarding the provision of language support resources for Deaf children and their families.** This vital piece of legislation **must be passed for the futures of every Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) child in our beloved state.** The educational resources provided in HB 5777 will start to unravel the historic oppression of Deaf students and the communication barriers and expectations that have been forced onto them. This bill is about equity.

It's about time that signed and spoken languages are respected equally. **We know that early intervention for language development is vital for all children -- Deaf and HOH children are not an exception.** While signed languages are accessible to most children, both Deaf and hearing, spoken languages are not. Deaf children deserve to be exposed to a language that is accessible to them in order to develop the communication and social skills necessary to thrive throughout the rest of their lives. The dangerous flipside to this - failing to meet the early language needs of Deaf children - often leads to decreased socio-economic attainment and feelings of isolation and depression.

Many opponents of such legislation worry that ensuring early access to sign language is somehow damaging to Deaf children's ability to learn spoken language. However, the fact is just the opposite is true. **Ensuring early access to sign language is actually the best way to encourage speaking and literacy development in Deaf children.**

In short, HB 5777 would produce better outcomes for Michigan's Deaf and HOH children across their lifespans. It recognizes and promotes sign language in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This bill is about equity. This bill is about civil rights. This bill is about human rights. This bill is about ensuring Michigan's children have bright futures full of opportunity. That's something we can all agree on.

Vote yes on HB 5777.

Thank you,

--

Ayesha Ghazi Edwin, MSW
Deputy Director

Joy Brewer

From: Ani Grigorian <ani@detroitdisabilitypower.org>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 11:35 AM
To: Joy Brewer; Rep. Rodney Wakeman (District 94); Rep. Luke Meerman (District 88); Rep. Laurie Pohutsky (District 19); Rep. John R. Roth (District 104); Rep. Daire Rendon (District 103); Rep. Mark Tisdell (District 45); Rep. Darrin Camilleri (District 23); Rep. Brenda Carter (District 29); Rep. Abraham Aiyash (District 4)
Subject: Vote YES on HB 5777

Your Honorable Representatives of the Families, Children, and Seniors Committee,

My name is Ani Grigorian and I am the Disability Access Consulting manager at Detroit Disability Power (DDP). We are a membership organization that builds and leverages the political power of our disability communities in Detroit and across Michigan.

Today, I'm contacting you in full support of the **Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids(LEAD-K) legislation (HB 5777) regarding the provision of language support resources for Deaf children and their families.** This vital piece of legislation **must be passed for the futures of every Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) child in our beloved state.** The educational resources provided in HB 5777 will start to unravel the historic oppression of Deaf students and the communication barriers and expectations that have been forced onto them. This bill is about equity.

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Vote yes on HB 5777.

Thank you,
Ani

--

Ani Grigorian
Disability Access Consulting Manager
(She/her)
248-928-3235

Please note: I work with DDP on Tuesdays- Thursdays

Joy Brewer

From: Shaney Whitfield <shey@detroitdisabilitypower.org>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 11:34 AM
To: Joy Brewer; Rep. Rodney Wakeman (District 94); Rep. Luke Meerman (District 88); Rep. Laurie Pohutsky (District 19); Rep. John R. Roth (District 104); Rep. Daire Rendon (District 103); Rep. Mark Tisdell (District 45); Rep. Darrin Camilleri (District 23); Rep. Brenda Carter (District 29); Rep. Abraham Aiyash (District 4)
Subject: Support HB 5777!

Your Honorable Representatives of the Families, Children, and Seniors Committee,

My name is Shey Whitfield, and I'm the Digital Organizer at Detroit Disability Power (DDP). We are a membership organization that builds and leverages the political power of our disability communities in Detroit and across Michigan.

Today, I'm contacting you in full support of **the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) legislation (HB 5777) regarding the provision of language support resources for Deaf children and their families.** This vital piece of legislation **must be passed for the futures of every Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) child in our beloved state.** The educational resources provided in HB 5777 will start to unravel the historic oppression of Deaf students and the communication barriers and expectations that have been forced onto them. This bill is about equity.

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Vote yes on HB 5777.

Thank you,

--

Shey Whitfield (She/They)
Digital Organizer
Detroit Disability Power
www.DetroitDisabilityPower.org

To Whom it May Concern:

I am the parent of 2 Deaf children, ages 26 and 32 and two Deaf grandchildren ages 3 and 1. My journey began at birth with each of my Deaf children. It wasn't the journey I had planned as there was no history of Deafness in our family, none the less it was the journey I had to embrace.

As a young mother, I was lost and needed to learn very quickly everything there was to know about raising a Deaf child. I read every piece of literature I could get my hands on, attended every support group possible, and asked question upon question of people who had walked before me on this journey. As a result, I choose for both of my children to receive cochlear implants at a young age. The medical program that we were involved with insisted that my children attend a verbal / listening educational program were success was measured based on their hearing peers. A measurement that was based not on "language" but more specifically "verbal language." We were told this is the only way for my children to find success. For some children, they will find success this way, but not all children. Not my children. My children found success by embracing their individuality. By embracing who they are and who they were meant to be. Knowing their own identity and knowing that it is okay to be Deaf.

My 32-year-old son chose to discontinue wearing his cochlear implant when he was 18. He is proud to be Deaf, he loves being Deaf and he is very successful. Because of a good educational system that supported his accommodations he is now an aviation mechanic for American Airlines and loves his career. He receives no assistance from government programs and gives back to the Deaf community by speaking to Deaf youth about career choices and goals.

My 26-year-old daughter is a stay-at-home mother raising two Deaf children ages 3 and 1. The children both have cochlear implants and are bilingual in both ASL and English. They are thriving and confident and emotionally stable because their mom and dad are the best Deaf mentors for their children. They are learning language without barriers.

We all have the basic human need to belong and find success and be understood. Without those we stand on a very weak emotional foundation. Language is a building block for that foundation at a very early age. Give the parents of Deaf children the option to learn and be assessed on the language that they can express and be understood whether it is spoken language, American Sign Language, or both.

The one thing that I learned is that no two children are alike. Deaf or hearing, male or female, American or European everyone is different. Different learning styles, different dreams, different needs and different definitions of happiness. Allow Deaf children and their parents to start their journey together with choices that will define their own success so that their journey of success can continue on into adulthood.

Lead-K is an important campaign that can have a positive impact on Deaf and Hard of Hearing children. It provides resources and support for parents and students laying a foundation for success in later years. I encourage you to educate yourself on the importance of this campaign for the future success and well being of the next generation of Deaf youth. You can be the difference!

Thank you,

Janis Jones-Duchnicki; Troy, Michigan; jajones762@gmail.com

Joy Brewer

From: Sovoya Davis <sovoya@umich.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 11:27 AM
To: Joy Brewer; Rep. Rodney Wakeman (District 94); Rep. Luke Meerman (District 88); Rep. Laurie Pohutsky (District 19); Rep. John R. Roth (District 104); Rep. Daire Rendon (District 103); Rep. Mark Tisdell (District 45); Rep. Darrin Camilleri (District 23); Rep. Brenda Carter (District 29); Rep. Abraham Aiyash (District 4)
Subject: Sharing My Support for HB 5777

I am writing to you today to issue my **unwavering and enthusiastic support of House Bill 5777**. It is vitally important that we usher this bill forward through the legislative process and begin the work of building a better future for our deaf and hard-of-hearing children. The resources and policies mandated in HB5777 will improve the educational services available for deaf and hard-of-hearing children, and *finally* begin to correct the disabling communicative barriers and expectations we have long foisted on them. As is so often the case when we begin to address and undo histories of oppression, the power of this bill comes from its grounding in equity.

By all linguistic measures, there is equity between signed and spoken language. Though our language leaves no traces in the fossil record, there is reason to believe that sign languages have co-existed alongside spoken languages for all of human history. Moreover, nearly a century of research has now confirmed that the linguistic structures of signed languages and spoken languages are similar, as are the neural processes of language production and perception. Infants raised in signing homes exhibit the same pace and pathway of language acquisition that is found in spoken language development – even babbling to themselves in the crib while they look at their hands. Indeed, the hands and eyes are so well-suited to the task of linguistic communication that isolated deaf children innovate their own language-like systems in order to perform one of the most fundamental of human activities, *talking to people*.

Thus, our biological capacity for language does not preference or privilege one mode of language over another, so long as the language is accessible. It is in this respect that a vast chasm exists between the choice of signed or spoken language for a child with a moderate to profound hearing impairment. Whereas a hearing child will find equally accessible either signed or spoken language (many hearing children of deaf adults grow up bilingual in a sign language), a deaf child has no natural access to auditory language. Sign language, however, is accessible to deaf children.

Thus, early interventions that provide exposure and access to sign language are the only way to guarantee typical language exposure, experience, and development for deaf children. **By all outcome and well-being measures, providing sign language access benefits deaf children.** All spoken language and hearing interventions run the risk of failure, and to fail in this domain is to deprive a child of a basic human need, language. Early language deprivation has severe and acute, lasting consequences for a child's educational and psycho-social development. Ramifications range from increased rates of depression to increased susceptibility to abuse. In school, deaf children deprived of early sign language can experience linguistic impairments that isolate them from peers and teachers, and research tells us that such linguistic isolation leads to and compounds other academic, social and developmental problems. Unsurprisingly, failing to meet the language needs of deaf children leads to their decreased socio-economic attainment as adults. Unfortunately, these detrimental outcomes have been the reality for most deaf and hard-of-hearing children for generations. Due to discriminatory and ableist views about signed versus spoken languages, deaf children have been forced to conform to hearing and speaking norms and they have suffered for it.

In addition to innumerable social and psychological benefits, which include improved relationship with caregivers, **early access to sign language is also the best way to guarantee speaking and literacy**

Joy Brewer

From: Ramiro Alvarez <ramiro@detroitdisabilitypower.org>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 11:16 AM
To: Joy Brewer; Rep. Rodney Wakeman (District 94); Rep. Luke Meerman (District 88); Rep. Laurie Pohutsky (District 19); Rep. John R. Roth (District 104); Rep. Daire Rendon (District 103); Rep. Mark Tisdell (District 45); Rep. Darrin Camilleri (District 23); Rep. Brenda Carter (District 29); Rep. Abraham Aiyash (District 4)
Subject: Support HB 5777

Your Honorable Representatives of the Families, Children, and Seniors Committee,

My name is Ramiro Alvarez and I'm the community organizer at Detroit Disability Power (DDP). We are a membership organization that builds and leverages the political power of our disability communities in Detroit and across Michigan.

Today, I'm contacting you in full support of the **Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) legislation (HB 5777) regarding the provision of language support resources for Deaf children and their families.** This vital piece of legislation **must be passed for the futures of every Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) child in our beloved state.** The educational resources provided in HB 5777 will start to unravel the historic oppression of Deaf students and the communication barriers and expectations that have been forced onto them. This bill is about equity.

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Many opponents of such legislation worry that ensuring early access to sign language is somehow damaging to Deaf children's ability to learn spoken language. However, the fact is just the opposite is true. **Ensuring early access to sign language is actually the best way to encourage speaking and literacy development in Deaf children.**

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Vote yes on HB 5777.

Thank you,

--

Ramiro "Rami" Alvarez
he|him they|them

313-247-9565

[Schedule a meeting with me!](#)

Detroit Disability Power, Community Organizer

www.DetroitDisabilityPower.org

Joy Brewer

From: Melody Ahern <melodyika@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 11:06 AM
To: Joy Brewer
Cc: Rep. Rodney Wakeman (District 94); Fmorrisonasl@gmail.com
Subject: Support HB5777

Melody Ahern
22408 Fresard Street
Saint Clair Shores, MI 48080
(586) 200-6698
Melodyika@gmail.com

March 15, 2022

Anderson House Office Building
124 N Capitol Ave
UNIT 521
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Representatives,

My name is Melody Ahern. I am mom of 3 Deaf children (4th is on the way). I have resided in Saint Clair Shores (Macomb County) for most of my life. I am here to share with you my experiences as a Deaf child in the public school system and now being a parent of Deaf children. As a child, I attended a mainstreamed Hearing Impaired program at Cousino High School in Warren, MI. I will first talk briefly about my experience as a child in "Hearing Impaired" program then share my experience being parent in 2016.

As a child, I was very isolated in the Hearing-Impaired classroom even though there were other deaf children in the same room. Our teacher did not invest in our education. In middle school, our teachers brought their dogs to school on Fridays for us to play with, and often times these same teachers would be on the phone for hours and just giving us free time. We played UNO cards or I would just chat with other students. In high school, it's pretty much the same situation to have a lot of free time. I was the teacher's pet. I would be given an assignment to correct everyone's homework. The teacher just sat there and talking on the phone most of the time. Rarely, did I ever have homework. When I did have it, I would be given a week to finish one simple sheet. I had only 2 classes that were mainstreamed with other hearing students with an interpreter but I was frustrating with the interpreter who used SEE (Signed Exact English) where my Deaf family used ASL (American Sign Language) so most of the time I couldn't understand the interpreter. The interpreter would give me the answers if I didn't understand the question.

I was never challenged academically because my peers were not on the same levels. I was left to entertain myself. I was not happy during my sophomore year so I got transferred to MSSD (Model Secondary School for the Deaf) in Washington DC. Unfortunately I was not happy there because it was very beyond my level and I was failing. I left MSSD to go back to Cousino in Warren, MI. I worked so hard during my junior year and ending of the year I was told that I won't be able to become senior next year because of my credit wasn't enough as I missed some failed classes in MSSD. I worked so hard during the summer to get "extra credit" then I got back to school in the fall supposedly to be senior but they told me the summer credit wasn't counted because it was wrong class. I was never told which class to take during the summer. That's where I just lost my motivation to graduate, I dropped out during my "senior year". Hopefully, you can have a visual (picture) of what my education was like.

Joy Brewer

From: Artur Pinkhasov <artpinkhasov@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 11:03 AM
To: Joy Brewer
Subject: Bill HB-5777

To whom it may concern,

I am Hard of Hearing and I have cerebral palsy. As someone who immigrated from Uzbekistan; both my parents didn't know the benefits of having sign language. and because of that, I didn't know sign language until I was in high school.

It's important to pass this bill; so that the parents have the resources and ability to make the best decision that they could have made . We say that it's best to have the kids to learn a language when they turn 1-5. and during that time frame it's also important to develop the resources available for parents to guide them to make those choices for their child. These parents have the ability to make the right decisions for their child and not be hidden from the choices.

I support bill HB-5777

Thank you,

Artur Pinkhasov

Joy Brewer

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I support bill HB-5777

Thank you,

Artur Pinkhasov

Joy Brewer

From: Rachel Cortez <rachel@detroitdisabilitypower.org>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 10:55 AM
To: Joy Brewer; Rep. Rodney Wakeman (District 94); Rep. Luke Meerman (District 88); Rep. Laurie Pohutsky (District 19); Rep. John R. Roth (District 104); Rep. Daire Rendon (District 103); Rep. Mark Tisdell (District 45); Rep. Darrin Camilleri (District 23); Rep. Brenda Carter (District 29); Rep. Abraham Aiyash (District 4)
Subject: Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids(LEAD-K) legislation (HB 5777)

Your Honorable Representatives of the Families, Children, and Seniors Committee,

My name is Rachel Cortez, and I'm an MSW intern at Detroit Disability Power (DDP). We are a membership organization that builds and leverages the political power of our disability communities in Detroit and across Michigan.

Today, I'm contacting you in full support of **the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids(LEAD-K) legislation (HB 5777) regarding the provision of language support resources for Deaf children and their families.** This vital piece of legislation **must be passed for the futures of every Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) child in our beloved state.** The educational resources provided in HB 5777 will start to unravel the historic oppression of Deaf students and the communication barriers and expectations that have been forced onto them. This bill is about equity.

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Vote yes on HB 5777.

Thank you,

Rachel Cortez

Joy Brewer

From: Dessa Cosma <dessa@detroitdisabilitypower.org>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 10:34 AM
To: Joy Brewer; Rep. Rodney Wakeman (District 94); Rep. Luke Meerman (District 88); Rep. Laurie Pohutsky (District 19); Rep. John R. Roth (District 104); Rep. Daire Rendon (District 103); Rep. Mark Tisdell (District 45); Rep. Darrin Camilleri (District 23); Rep. Brenda Carter (District 29); Rep. Abraham Aiyash (District 4)
Subject: Support for LEAD K, HB 5777

Honorable Representatives of the Families, Children, and Seniors Committee,

My name is Dessa and I'm the director of Detroit Disability Power (DDP). We are a cross-disability membership organization that builds and leverages the political power of disability communities in Detroit and across Michigan.

I'm emailing you in support of **the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids(LEAD-K) legislation (HB 5777) regarding the provision of language support resources for Deaf children and their families.** This vital piece of legislation **must be passed for the futures of every Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) child in our beloved state.** The educational resources provided in HB 5777 will start to unravel the historic oppression of Deaf students and the communication barriers and expectations that have been forced onto them. This bill is about equity.

It's about time that signed and spoken languages are respected equally. **We know that early intervention for language development is vital for all children -- Deaf and HOH children are not an exception.** While signed languages are accessible to most children, both Deaf and hearing, spoken languages are not. Deaf children deserve to be exposed to a language that is accessible to them in order to develop the communication and social skills necessary to thrive throughout the rest of their lives. The dangerous flipside to this - failing to meet the early language needs of Deaf children - often leads to decreased socio-economic attainment and feelings of isolation and depression.

Many opponents of such legislation worry that ensuring early access to sign language is somehow damaging to Deaf children's ability to learn spoken language. However, the fact is just the opposite is true. **Ensuring early access to sign language is actually the best way to encourage speaking and literacy development in Deaf children.**

In short, HB 5777 would produce better outcomes for Michigan's Deaf and HOH children across their lifespans. It recognizes and promotes sign language in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This bill is about equity. This bill is about civil rights. This bill is about human rights. This bill is about ensuring Michigan's children have bright futures full of opportunity. That's something we can all agree on.

Please vote yes on HB 5777.

Thank you,

Dessa Cosma
Detroit Disability Power, Executive Director
www.DetroitDisabilityPower.org

Joy Brewer

From: Blythe Kim <blythe@detroitdisabilitypower.org>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 10:30 AM
To: Joy Brewer; Rep. Rodney Wakeman (District 94); Rep. Luke Meerman (District 88); Rep. Laurie Pohutsky (District 19); Rep. John R. Roth (District 104); Rep. Daire Rendon (District 103); Rep. Mark Tisdell (District 45); Rep. Darrin Camilleri (District 23); Rep. Brenda Carter (District 29); Rep. Abraham Aiyash (District 4)
Subject: Vote Yes on HB5777

Your Honorable Representatives of the Families, Children, and Seniors Committee,

My name is Blythe Kim, and I'm the Communications Director at Detroit Disability Power (DDP). We are a membership organization that builds and leverages the political power of our disability communities in Detroit and across Michigan.

Today, I'm contacting you in full support of the **Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) legislation (HB 5777) regarding the provision of language support resources for Deaf children and their families.** This vital piece of legislation **must be passed for the futures of every Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) child in our beloved state.** The educational resources provided in HB 5777 will start to unravel the historic oppression of Deaf students and the communication barriers and expectations that have been forced onto them. This bill is about equity.

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Vote yes on HB 5777.

Thank you,

Blythe Kim (she/her)
Detroit Disability Power, Communications Director
www.DetroitDisabilityPower.org

Joy Brewer

From: Michele Kramer <mwk0707@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 10:21 AM
To: Joy Brewer
Subject: Fwd: HB5777 Re: support services for parents of Deaf and HH children

Just to reiterate that I support this bill.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: mwk0707@hotmail.com
Date: March 15, 2022 at 9:18:14 AM EDT
To: joybrewer@house.mi.gov
Subject: HB5777 Re: support services for parents of Deaf and HH children

Our adult daughter is severe to profoundly Deaf. I thought some of the services were good in Oakland County, at the time, but I was really clueless. The audio gram showed that hearing aids would not help her, yet the County insisted that she wear them, and did throughout elementary school. We insisted as the specialists told us to do that.

So, in this scenario, our daughter was placed in an aural program.

She had no means of communication, at all until she was close to 5 years old.

Can you imagine that? Even your pets can communicate and comprehend more than she could.

It was due to the insight of her teacher that she would benefit from ASL. Still at 5 years of age it is slow and difficult to begin a first language.

In Deaf Education there are children with a multitude of disabilities that the single teacher and possibly one aid have to deal with. It was not just presenting and teaching but managing other physical and behavioral disabilities. I know this from my daughter's experience, as well as her working as a substitute teacher in the field.

The teachers are trained in ASL, but as I said they are very distracted in the classroom.

There needs to be more support staff so that the teacher can actually present new knowledge to the children.

Upon being mainstreamed into hearing classes, qualified interpreters were not always available. Also, in education 'Notetakers' are really needed. The teachers would tell another student to share their notes.

They were not often adequate.

I don't know whether the school district didn't want to help our daughter learn or was pushing the 'Technical School Program' but the counselors and teachers would tell us that our daughter would not be college material. We took this as an affront and insult to her intelligence. We learned sign language and worked with her to help her understand her homework. She graduated from college and has had increasingly higher level jobs as time has progressed.

Please take all of this into account to help other students

MDK

Birmingham MI

Sent from my iPad

Joy Brewer

From: Julie Kramer <jskramer13@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 10:07 AM
To: Joy Brewer
Subject: Support HB5777

Dear Joy Brewer,

I support HB5777. I wish that my parents had more support and resources for me. Once they found out that I was Deaf, they have no idea what to do with me. Someone told them that I should be in an oral pre-school. I did go to the oral pre-school, then the teacher noticed that the oral program was not working for me. She knew American Sign Language (ASL), and she decided to teach me ASL during my lunch and recess time. I appreciated that she encouraged my parents to let me learn ASL. I had no language for five years. My parents wished that I had learned ASL from 0-5 years old. I lost 5 years' worth of learning and had no language. Then the teacher recommended that I go into the Deaf Program, which was in the Ferndale District - Taft Elementary school, which then moved to the Bloomfield Hills District.

When I grew up, I noticed that a lot of oral students were behind in school which caused them to stay 1-2 more years to graduate. Since they lost some language, I caught up. I graduated from Lahser High school on time. I attended NTID and then transferred and graduated from Barton College in North Carolina.

When I was 0-5 years old, I was in the Southfield District then moved to Beverly Hills, which was in the Birmingham District.

It is worth it to have resources and support for any parents who have Deaf children. It will be a benefit to them.

One of the families was looking for support and wanted to learn ASL and they found me thru social media I was teaching ASL to the family since their son had become Deaf. They were concerned about him losing language.

I support HB5777.

Julie Kramer

Clawson District

Jskramer13@gmail.com

497 Roth Blvd

Clawson, MI 48017

Joy Brewer

From: Tina Whitehurst <maluvjnk@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 9:19 AM
To: Joy Brewer
Subject: HB 5777

Hello.

Please support the HB 5777!!!!

Thank you.

Joy Brewer

From: Michele Kramer <mwk0707@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 9:18 AM
To: Joy Brewer
Subject: HB5777 Re: support services for parents of Deaf and HH children

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Please take all of this into account to help other students MDK Birmingham MI

Sent from my iPad

Joy Brewer

From: Kaci Messeder <kaci@detroitdisabilitypower.org>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 9:16 AM
To: Rep. Rodney Wakeman (District 94); Joy Brewer; Rep. Luke Meerman (District 88); Rep. Abraham Aiyash (District 4); Rep. Laurie Pohutsky (District 19); Rep. Daire Rendon (District 103); Rep. John R. Roth (District 104); Rep. Brenda Carter (District 29); Rep. Darrin Camilleri (District 23); Rep. Mark Tisdell (District 45)
Subject: Support HB 5777!

Your Honorable Representatives of the Families, Children, and Seniors Committee,

My name is Kaci Messeder, and I'm the Policy Analyst at Detroit Disability Power (DDP). We are a membership organization that builds and leverages the political power of our disability communities in Detroit and across Michigan.

Today, I'm contacting you in full support of the **Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) legislation (HB 5777) regarding the provision of language support resources for Deaf children and their families.** This vital piece of legislation **must be passed for the futures of every Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) child in our beloved state.** The educational resources provided in HB 5777 will start to unravel the historic oppression of Deaf students and the communication barriers and expectations that have been forced onto them. This bill is about equity.

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Vote yes on HB 5777.

Thank you,

Kaci Messeder (She/Her)
Detroit Disability Power, Policy Analyst
www.DetroitDisabilityPower.org

Joy Brewer

From: Theresa Worrell-Miracle <tenderspirit.tw@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 9:07 AM
To: Joy Brewer
Subject: LEAD K Bill 5777

Good morning Joy,

I have been raised by Deaf parents, i am a deaf person and I have raised Deaf children and my Deaf son is raising his Deaf daughter. We all speak in ASL. We are college graduates and some have graduated from graduate school. We fought for ASL to be the language of instruction over the generations.

Please allow us to use our language to learn. The Deaf people know what's best for us. Please hear our voices and end oppression.

Thank you,
Theresa Miracle

Sent from my iPhone

Sent from my iPhone

Joy Brewer

From: Kristine Ginther <kristineginther@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 9:06 AM
To: Joy Brewer
Subject: HB5777

Good Morning

I wanted to share our story, and ask you to please support HB5777.

Growing up, I was one of eight children, and my oldest brother had 10% hearing loss. Not only did they not offer him the proper services at the time, but he was thrown into a program with children who did not have the same needs as he did. It took my mother doing her own research and finding a school with a principle willing to work with her to get my brother into a class he actually fit into, and she also had to fight to get him an FM system, for my brother to succeed.

Fast forward to when my third child was born, and we found out he was deaf. We were only given one option at the hospital, which was a cochlear implant, and I had to ask what other programs there were. My son was two years old and we had to do our own questioning and research to find what our son needed in order to communicate with us. We explored our options, and knew the best fit for him was a total communication program. What stunned me was how many people I met over the years who never knew about the DHH program growing up, and how many grown adults who are deaf or hard of hearing felt like they missed out on an entire part of their life and culture!

Our son is 13 now, but when he was 8 he got hit in the head with a ball at a birthday party, which resulted in the need for his cochlear implant to come out. For 6 months, if he had not had American Sign Language as a communicative tool, he would have had little to no communication tool to use. Knowing that we searched for all of our resources and he was given his best chances, he transitioned from cochlear, no cochlear, to new cochlear with absolutely zero communicative issues. Sign language was his, and our, saving grace.

Now my husband and I have had our ninth child, who we found out is also deaf. We already know the routes we will take with him, and have already gotten involved in the Early On program. He is only 4 months old. But, this is only because we have all of our resources from years of experience with our older deaf son. Too many deaf or hard of hearing children get little to no services, and too many families have no idea what they can do for their child. I have met so many families over the years who have said they never knew about various programs, schools, or camps until their child was already in grade school. And meeting children who have little to no language at the age of 7 or 8, struggling in an all hearing mainstream school without services, is heart breaking.

The most critical years for language are birth through kindergarten, and I ask and pray that you please vote to help these children and families have access to ALL language options. That they be given every possible resource available so they can make their own informed choices. Most children who are born deaf do not benefit from a hearing aid, and cochlear implants (if parents even decide to go that route) are not available until after the age of 1, and it is a critical time where language and development skills form. These programs my children are in, where ASL and visual learning are taught, have kept my children on track and have brought immense social and educational clarity to them, and to us. These programs also help family members.

Please help families be given EVERY option, and not just the select few options a provider may deem necessary. Deafness is not a disability, and we all can benefit from giving these children EVERY chance to succeed.

Sincerely,
Kristine Ginther
Mother to 2 deaf children and 7 hearing

Joy Brewer

From: kelsey beach <kbeach1816@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 9:04 AM
To: Joy Brewer
Subject: House Bill 5777

To whom it may concern,

I am sending this letter to show my support for house bill 5777 being passed.

As a hearing mother of a Deaf 7 year-old boy, I am in 100% support of this bill. We live in Howell School District and my son attends Michigan School for the Deaf.

To begin, I'll give some back story. When I found out my son, Antonio, was profoundly Deaf at 2 months old, I was in shock. I did not know what to do or who to turn to. I hadn't previously had experience with the Deaf/Hard of Hearing community, nor did I have anyone in my family who was.

Antonio was born profoundly Deaf due to genetics. He is a happy, healthy, thriving young boy - and I directly relate this to his use of American Sign Language. From the start, he had exposure to language which is the most crucial aspect for developing information pathways in the brain. The studies show that without this, children suffer from cognitive delays, mental health difficulties, lower quality of life, a higher level of trauma, and limited health literacy. American Sign Language gives children access from the very start - the same way a hearing child picks up language from the very start. This is about equal access.

I had to do mounds of research to find tools assisting us in American Sign Language. If we had more support and resources in this area, this would have been EXTREMELY HELPFUL. American Sign Language should be a resource for all Deaf/Hard of Hearing children and their families without having to struggle to find options.

Please, for the sake of all Deaf and Hard of Hearing children, and their families trying to give their child access in a world that makes it difficult - PLEASE be a source of change and pass House bill 5777.

Thank you for your time,
Kelsey Beach

Joy Brewer

From: Bob DeVries <devries.b@gcsionline.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 8:55 AM
To: Joy Brewer
Cc: Vereb, Anita
Subject: Families Committee Today

Hi Joy,

One of my clients, Anita Vereb, was hoping to testify via zoom during the Families, Children, and Seniors Committee today re: HB 5777. She sent you an email a couple days ago but hasn't heard back.

Is it possible to get her the zoom info for committee today? She is cc'd on this email.

Thanks!

Bob DeVries
Governmental Consultant Services, Inc. (GCSI)
616-334-6710 (cell)
517-464-6216 (office)

To Families, Children and Seniors Committee

I am a Deaf Education long term teacher in Genesee County. I teach students with varying degrees of hearing loss. Some of my students are hard of hearing while others are profoundly deaf. The largest issue I deal with within my classroom is trying to teach content to those students who are language deprived.

Often, students come to our school after experiencing failure in other oral programs. These students will come to us as late as 9th – 10th grade. By this time, they have gone 15+ years with no mastery of language. This is no fault of their own but due to the fact that their parent(s) did not have the resources to make a sound decision on what should be the language of instruction to their child. At this age, the student will almost always have language deprivation for the rest of his/her life.

Unfortunately these children are a product of a failed Michigan Deaf education system. For these reasons, I STRONGLY support HB 5777. Language needs to be acquired during the critical years (birth – age 5) for language development.

I would like to share a personal experience . I grew up as an oralist. I learned American Sign Language when I was in college. That is where I learned a lot using ASL. I was struggling with my knowledge of understanding growing up. I felt using ASL benefits me a lot. I am able to voice out using ASL instead of someone to oppress me. Using ASL helped me read better with a better visualization. Lead-K will offer better choices for the parents to raise their Deaf children with a variety of resources, not just one resource alone.

If you care about language deprivation, equality for all and parental CHOICE, I ask you to vote for and support HB 5777.

Gina Colombo
ginactwin@me.com
810-515-8379

Joy Brewer

From: Ann Mose <marrmose@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 8:17 AM
To: Joy Brewer
Subject: HB5777

DEAF PERSON WHO NEED TO FULL ACCESS WHAT THEY NEED
LEAD-K HELP CHILDREN HAVE COMMUNICATION.!!!

I SUPPORT LEAD-K HB5777.

THANK YOU

ANN MOSE