

## Joy Brewer

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**From:** Demet Kayabasi <kayabasi@umich.edu>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 7, 2022 10:57 AM  
**To:** Joy Brewer  
**Subject:** Support of House Bill 5777

Dear Ms. Joy Brewer,

I am a graduate student in Linguistics at the University of Michigan, and my research revolves around sign languages and multi-modal communication.

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 development in deaf children.** In the US, research has shown that early access to sign language helps children develop speaking and literacy skills, and that deaf children learning sign and speech in bimodal-bilingual environments outperform deaf children who are being exposed to speech alone. Acquiring a sign language does not inhibit the development of a spoken language; instead, controlling for other factors, English language attainment is *higher* for deaf children with better American Sign Language skills.

In sum, on the matter of language choice, the scientific evidence is clear: sign languages are languages and the best possible outcomes for deaf and hard-of-hearing children occur when sign language access is provided. HB5777 creates mechanisms and

resources for providing improved language access to deaf children and their families in Michigan. In doing so, this legislation **complies with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which calls for the recognition and promotion of sign languages.** Moreover, HB5777 paves the way for overall improved language and English literacy development for deaf children and, in doing so, **respects the right to bilingualism mandated by both the National Federation of the Deaf and the World Federation of the Deaf.** Thus, though targeted at our educational system, **HB5777 is fundamentally a piece of civil and human rights legislation.**

In this case, however, the arc of the moral universe does not bend toward justice by *hearing calls* or *amplifying voices of the oppressed* because the very source of oppression *is* the harm caused by normative pressures to speak and hear. Rather, with HB5777, **we have the chance to finally *open our eyes* and *remove the handcuffs* that have needlessly burdened and failed generations of deaf and hard-of-hearing children.** In the interest of children across the state of Michigan, we must pass this legislation.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Yours sincerely,  
Demet Kayabaşı

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Demet Kayabaşı (she/her/hers)  
PhD Student, Department of Linguistics  
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

March 6, 2022

*"It is amazing to see how visual accessible language makes an enormous difference in my deaf and hard of hearing students' lives. Language should not be a barrier but a pathway towards self-actualization and becoming self-contributing citizens of society,"* wrote Natalie Grupido in her Philosophy of Education questionnaire after being selected as Roseville Community School's Middle School Teacher of the Year for 2021-2022.

*Natalie Grupido, who is deaf with an Educational Specialist degree, has over 25 years of experience as an administrator, educator, and mentor in preschool to post-secondary education. She has taught deaf, deaf-blind, and hearing children, and their families, in regular (all hearing) classrooms, self-contained deaf/hard of hearing and deafblind classrooms, co-op classrooms with both deaf/hard of hearing and hearing, mainstreamed classrooms, and a residential setting for the deaf and hard of hearing. She has taught at several universities and colleges throughout the nation.*

*Natalie has obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education and Educational Specialist Degrees from Gallaudet University as well as her Master of Arts in Special Education (Deaf Education; minor in Deafblind) and Educational Administration certification from Michigan State University. It is her lifelong ambition to obtain a doctorate degree in emotional intelligence and its impact on deaf learners.*

I was in the middle of a lesson with my deaf/hard of hearing social studies class, when the school board president as well as the superintendent came into my classroom and presented me a letter, *"Your nomination by our district is a tribute to the skills and commitment that you bring to your students and your profession. This honor is all the more significant because it reflects the respect and admiration of the teachers and administrators with whom you work every day."* I was stunned. More so because throughout my professional career of 25+ years, I have encountered innumerable contentious debates on the education of deaf and hard of hearing students, who often are disabled by the lack of linguistic proficiency. It was greatly appreciated that recognition was given for my deaf/hard of hearing having a full-accessible language barrier-free environment filled with authenticity, captivation, and comprehension. As it should be throughout the nation.

Since the majority of my deaf and hard of hearing students are profoundly language deprived, which seriously impedes their high-level semantic structure, or schema, it becomes a neuro-developmental emergency for me as their teacher. It is not because they are deaf or hard of hearing that they struggle, it is because of the lack of language accessibility. Ultimately, the majority of deaf/hard of hearing students pay the price since language barriers are placed to the bereavement of their being.

Again, I implore you, as a Deaf professional who grew up and still resides in this Great State of Michigan, to take heed and acknowledge what a district came to realization, which is to ensure that our deaf and hard of hearing children receive what is rightfully theirs, language and communication without the constant ideological battles that are harming their well-being. I cannot stress enough the magnitude importance of passing the LEAD-K bill #5777. Thank you.

Natalie Grupido, Ed.S  
25885 Dale  
Roseville, Michigan 48066  
(586) 439-0139  
grupidon@yahoo.com

March 6, 2020

APPROVE THE LEAD K 5777 BILL

Dear Rodney Wakeman and whomever,

My name is Jackie Danz and I am 25-years-old deaf woman that strongly believes in the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf and Hard of Hearing kids and I will tell you why. I grew up “hard of hearing” in Michigan my whole life, in an all hearing family that attended hearing schools since middle of first grade all the way through high school. I wear hearing aids since I was born and didn’t have access to sign language or interpreters. And I happened to graduate high school with honors.

I struggled so much in school socially but more so academically during my elementary years and middle school years as well as my high school years. I worked twice as hard than my hearing peers, trying to keep up with the work and what is being said. I will share a few moments of when I was a kid so here it goes... I remember so vividly when I was in first grade doing a reading test with my teacher in the hallway. I would see pictures, but I could not communicate verbally or understand what these things were... tree, butterfly, ball, etc. For a first grader to not know how to speak out loud or not clear enough or have comprehension without having access to a visual language (ASL) is very concerning. In third grade with my special education teacher, I remembered feeling so bad seeing her frustrations with me when I tried to learn about money and numbers such as a simple quarter that we kept working on that felt like forever. Another thing that was not good was my parents filling out the homework and projects for me because I wouldn’t understand the assignments auditorily and in written language, whereas if I had sign language from a baby to young age, everything would be more clearer to me visually. That being said, this is where I DO NOT want deaf and hard of hearing kids to have the same experiences that I went through.

Eventually, my hearing and lip-reading skills improved a bit slowly over the years with the help of my hearing aids. Keep in mind that hearing aids and cochlear implants are tools – not cures that makes them hear. They will never be able to match the levels of their hearing peers. I am grateful that I happened to speak but all those times looking back, I wish I knew sign language growing up or both – spoken English and sign language. It would have made my life a lot easier and happy too. And then when I went to college taking ASL courses, WOW. It changed my life for the better because I didn't have to use my voice and that it was 100% accessible without having to struggle lip reading and hearing auditorily. I am extremely grateful that sign language exists, and it is a language that makes me happy and whole when I use it.

I am also very open when it comes to mental health too and those who were language deprived including myself, have a greater chance of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, etc. There are studies that have shown that. Not only it was hard academically, but mentally, physically and emotionally, it takes a toll on us having lip-read every single day in school and outside of school, if we don't have access to sign language at a very young age. It just not very effective because we cannot hear in the first place. That is why I am a huge advocate for deaf and hard of hearing kids and mental health.

So, since I told you a few of my experiences, I hope you and others really consider approving the LEAD-K BILL 5777. It is so extremely important to us and we won't ever give up until it is approved. We want these deaf and hard of hearing children to have full access of understanding the communication and their language especially in the academic field. Please take serious consideration and think about the future of the lives with deaf and hard of hearing kids. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Jackie Danz  
Jacko1196@gmail.com

## Joy Brewer

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**From:** Anna Whitney <annabw@umich.edu>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 8, 2022 12:10 AM  
**To:** Joy Brewer  
**Subject:** LEAD-K Legislation

Dear Committee Clerk Joy Brewer,

I am a PhD student affiliated with the University of Michigan, studying in the Department of Linguistics. I have worked closely with spoken languages for over a decade, and I have worked with sign languages for almost five years now.

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.

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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 development in deaf children.** In the US, research has shown that early access to sign language helps children develop speaking and literacy skills, and that deaf children learning sign and speech in bimodal-bilingual environments outperform deaf children who are being exposed to speech alone. Acquiring a sign language does not inhibit the development of a spoken language; instead, controlling for other factors, English language attainment is *higher* for deaf children with better American Sign Language skills.

In sum, on the matter of language choice, the scientific evidence is clear: sign languages are languages and the best possible outcomes for deaf and hard-of-hearing children occur when sign language access is provided. HB5777 creates mechanisms and resources for providing improved language access to deaf children and their families in Michigan. In doing so, this legislation **complies with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which calls for the recognition and promotion of sign languages.** Moreover, HB5777 paves the way for overall improved language and English literacy development for deaf children and, in doing so, **respects the right to bilingualism mandated by both the National Federation of the Deaf and the World Federation of the Deaf.** Thus, though targeted at our educational system, **HB5777 is fundamentally a piece of civil and human rights legislation.**

In this case, however, the arc of the moral universe does not bend toward justice by *hearing calls or amplifying voices of the oppressed* because the very source of oppression is the harm caused by normative pressures to speak and hear. Rather, with HB5777, **we have the chance to finally open our eyes and remove the handcuffs that have needlessly burdened and failed generations of deaf and hard-of-hearing children.** In the interest of children across the state of Michigan, we must pass this legislation.

Thank you so much for your time, I hope you will do the right thing.

Very best wishes,  
Anna Whitney



## Joy Brewer

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**From:** Sovoya Davis <sovoya@umich.edu>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 8, 2022 9:58 AM  
**To:** Joy Brewer; Rep. Rodney Wakeman (District 94); Rep. Luke Meerman (District 88); Rep. Laurie Pohutsky (District 19); Rep. Daire Rendon (District 103); Rep. John R. Roth (District 104); Rep. Mark Tisdell (District 45); Rep. Darrin Camilleri (District 23); Rep. Brenda Carter (District 29); Rep. Abraham Aiyash (District 4)  
**Subject:** Bill HB5777

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.

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Sovoya Davis (She/Her)  
University of Michigan PhD Student  
Department of Linguistics

## House Bill 5777 – Please vote YES!

My name is Rebecca Calaman. I strongly support the passage of HB 5777.

HB 5777 focuses on Language Equality and Acquisition specifically in American Sign Language (ASL) and English for children who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) during the critical period of language acquisition (ages birth to 5 years). During this time period, the human brain is shaped and prepared for literacy development, cognitive capacity is built, communication needs/abilities are established, and the groundwork is laid for future academic achievement. Far too many DHH children in Michigan are beginning kindergarten without these basic and critical language foundations.

Children who are DHH are visual learners. Spoken language is not easily processed by many, if not most, of these learners. ASL is a visual gestural language which presents information in a way that is easily processed by the brain. According to the research of Dr Laura Ann Petitto, renowned cognitive neuroscientist: “The human brain does not discriminate between the hands and the tongue. People discriminate, but not our biological human brain.” For further reading, <https://v12.gallaudet.edu/pen-program/pen-faculty/laura-ann-petitto/>.

LEAD-K Michigan (leadkmich@gmail.com) has been working with Michigan legislators to pass a bill that will address the language development needs of all DHH children in Michigan. LEAD-K recognizes the critical need for both languages to be codified in law. LEAD-K laws have already been passed in California, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, New Jersey, Georgia, Hawaii, Connecticut, Maine, Oregon, South Dakota and Texas with several other states working on passing legislation. For more information on LEAD-K, visit [www.lead-k.org](http://www.lead-k.org).

This issue is important to me on both personal and professional levels.

As the parent of a Deaf adult, I became involved in fighting for my child’s right to equal access to language acquisition (both ASL and English) when she was still an infant. Our early intervention teacher introduced us to ASL (American Sign Language) and the Deaf Community where we had access to Deaf mentors, language models and role models for our daughter. I was given options and opportunities that allowed my child to thrive in her educational environment. Many families across Michigan are not being given language options or opportunities. Mine is a success story. With ASL and the support of the Deaf Community, along with some excellent teachers, my adult daughter is fluent in both ASL and English. She has earned two Masters degrees (developmental psychology and linguistics), is a world traveler, owns her own business and is raising three delightful children.

As a licensed professional counselor, I have worked with many families over the past 30 years and have witnessed too many DHH children enter school not ready to learn because of language deprivation. They do not have foundations in either ASL or English. These language delays are difficult to overcome. Please help us gain equality in language development for all DHH babies and young children in Michigan.

**I respectfully ask you to vote YES on House Bill 5777.**

Sincerely,

Rebecca Calaman, MA, NCC, LPC  
3304 Schoolhouse Drive, Waterford, MI 48329  
248 599 9771  
[beccacalaman@gmail.com](mailto:beccacalaman@gmail.com)

cc: Mrs Freida Morrison





March 3, 2022

Dear Rep. Frederick,

I am Deb Atwood, I represent Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services in Grand Rapids, and I write today in support of House Bill 5777 and urge its speedy passage.

For almost three decades the non-profit I lead has worked in West Michigan to provide equal communication access, education, and advocacy to the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing in pursuit of all life's opportunities

We work in 27 counties (and counting!) where we serve everyone from toddlers to older adults, offering excellent youth programming, hearing assistive technology, certified interpreters, advocacy, educational workshops, American Sign Language classes, and much more.

We are a comprehensive, full-service agency serving the needs of the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing communities.

What we have found in our work with children and their families - and our work with adults who did not have opportunities as youth - is that language deprivation has a huge negative impact on Deaf and Hard of Hearing children being kindergarten ready and thus a huge impact on the rest of their lives. Many of the people we serve get behind early in life and struggle the rest of their lives to catch up. The emphasis in HB-5777 on improved language acquisition in the State of Michigan for our Deaf and Hard of Hearing students ages 0-5 will make a big difference as these kiddos progress through the school system and as they graduate and become members of the Michigan workforce.

Equal accessibility for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities is often overlooked. Thus, we are strongly in support of HB-5777 and see it as an important part of our ongoing mission to ensure that the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing have the same opportunities as their peers at every level of their educational journey and in every other facet of their lives from cradle to grave.

Sincerely,

*Deb Atwood*

Deb Atwood, Executive Director  
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services  
Grand Rapids

**Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services**

3680 44<sup>th</sup> St SE – STE 201, Kentwood, MI 49512 P 616.732.7358 F 616.732.7365 [www.deafhhs.org](http://www.deafhhs.org)

EIN: 82-055112





**Deaf Community Advocacy Network**  
2111 Orchard Lake Road, Suite #101  
Sylvan Lake, MI 48320  
(248) 332-3323 TTY  
(248) 332-3331 Voice  
(248) 332-7334 Fax  
(248) 209-6437 VP  
deafcan@deafcan.org

March 1, 2022

The Honorable Brenda Carter  
Anderson House Office Building  
124 N. Capitol Avenue  
Lansing, MI 48933

Representative Carter,

DEAF C.A.N.! is a non profit organization located in Sylvan Lake. For the past 40+ years, we have been providing comprehensive services for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind people ([www.deafcan.org](http://www.deafcan.org)).

New legislation was just introduced by Representative Fredrick - Bill #5777. We sincerely hope you will take a look at this critical legislation that will impact the lives and education of Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind children living in Michigan.

LEAD-K (Language Equality & Acquisition for Deaf Kids by Kindergarten) is a landmark movement spreading across the country. The main purpose LEAD-K is to ensure that our deaf and hard of hearing children (age 0-5) have equal access to two languages; American Sign Language (ASL) and English. It is our fervent hope that Michigan will join 17 states who have passed similar legislation, including California, Hawaii, Oregon, South Dakota, Georgia and Louisiana to improve the lives of Deaf children.

The mission of LEAD-K is to ensure the foundation of language necessary for acquisition of English literacy when they enter school and to have language parity with their hearing counterparts by the time they enter kindergarten.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

<https://www.lead-k.org/> -The LEAD-K Campaign is a direct response to the alarming number of Deaf and hard of hearing children arriving at school without language. Language deprivation has irreparable catastrophic consequences on the educational, social and vocational development of Deaf and hard of hearing children.

When provided with access and opportunities, the Deaf child has normal ability to develop language. The Deaf child who has the foundation of language will acquire English literacy.

The Campaign aims to end language deprivation through information to families about language milestones and assessments that measure language milestone achievements, and data collection that holds our current education system accountable.

**Linking Deaf and Hard of Hearing People with Community Services**

LEAD-K, believes that Deaf children benefit from American Sign Language (ASL), a natural visual language, however our goal is language acquisition regardless of the language used, whether ASL or English or both. We cannot afford to lose another generation of Deaf children by engaging in a ideological war. Deaf children who have language are Kindergarten-ready.

Thanking you in advance for your support. If you need any additional information or would like to talk to Deaf members of my staff, please feel free to reach out.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marcy Colton", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Marcy Colton, MA, LPC, BEI 1  
Director

/mwc  
cc: LEAD-K Michigan



March 7, 2022

To Chair Rodney Wakeman,

My name is Christine Spike, and I am an ASHA certified and licensed Speech-Language Pathologist in our great state of Michigan. I have serviced Deaf and hard of hearing students across Oakland County from preschool age to high school for the past twenty-four years in the public school setting. I am writing to share my support of the LEAD-K Bill HB5777.

As a speech-language pathologist, I believe language development to be a top priority, regardless of the communication mode the child uses. In my experience, I have witnessed a strong bias in the system that encourages English over American Sign Language (ASL). It is my belief that ASL should be promoted equally. Families should be educated on both languages equally and given the opportunity to make the best choice for their family and their child.

It is critical that LEAD-K gets passed to support Deaf children and their families. From an early age, Deaf children often lag behind their same age hearing peers in expressive and receptive language without intense support and a strong language base. Deaf children rely on visual support. If a child does not benefit from technology, or the family does not make a personal choice to provide technology, their child is often at risk to develop further language deprivation without the access to ASL.

It takes a village in a young child's life to grow and develop their skills. From an early age, families need to be provided with all options equally and without bias to make the best decision for their child in the area of language development and acquisition. In turn, families deserve to have their child evaluated in their native language and to understand their child's skills and abilities.

As professionals, we want to provide families with an accurate measure of their child's skills in their primary language, either English or American Sign Language. By passing LEAD-K (HB5777), families will be supported, children will be supported and as a result, the community is supported. Passing LEAD-K would be a WIN-WIN for all families of Deaf children, the Deaf community and for professionals who serve the Deaf and hard of hearing population.

Thank you for your time and consideration. My contact information is [cspike@bloomfield.org](mailto:cspike@bloomfield.org).

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Spike, M.A., CCC-SLP/L  
Speech-Language Pathologist  
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program  
Bloomfield Hills Schools



March 3, 2022

Dear Families, Children and Committee Members,

I am an audiologist with 25 years of experience working with children. I have been at Michigan School for the Deaf for 22 years. The one common thread to predict success with a deaf or hard of hearing child is access to LANGUAGE. The path for language and literacy success is unique to each child. I believe that House Bill 5777 can provide families with the data, resources and services needed for their child success.

Language deprivation occurs when a child doesn't have adequate exposure to language. When a child enters Kindergarten language deprived, academic success can be challenging if not impossible. The purpose of House Bill 5777 is to prevent this from happening to our deaf and hard of hearing children. We have a responsibility to empower families with data to show them how their child is progressing towards language development and the resources to ensure they can make an informed decision for their child's literacy and language success. If the data shows the chosen pathway is not working, then the parents and educators will have the tools and information to adjust.

Professionals in the field may tell you that with the use of technology, deaf or hard of hearing children can achieve normal language skills using only listening and spoken language. However, they fail to mention that some hard of hearing or deaf children do not have access to language using listening and spoken language. I have worked with children that have physical abnormalities that prevent them from using technology and children that consistently use technology that doesn't provide them with adequate benefit through the auditory system to access spoken language. Also, there are some families that may not choose technology. Because each deaf or hard of hearing child has different needs and abilities, families should be provided with balanced information about modes of communication, hearing aid and cochlear implant technology, and the use of American Sign Language or spoken English.

The bill is a critical step in supporting Michigan deaf and hard of hearing children.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Diane Zuckschwerdt, MA, CCC-A

Audiologist



March 7, 2022

Re: LEAD- K Bill # HB-5777

To Whom It Concerns,

I am a Deaf person privileged to be part of the 10% of the Deaf population to be born from Deaf parents. I had access to a language since birth which is American Sign Language. I am fluent in ASL which gave me the skills to learn and be fluent in English as well. I also have Deaf and Hard of Hearing children (Adults). They are fluent in both languages, because they had access to ASL/English since birth as well. As a mother I fought many unnecessary battles to make sure they were provided access to language in the school system the same way my own parents fought for me many moons ago. My opinions did not matter, but I had to make sure my voice was heard.

I worked at the school for the Deaf for 14 years as a social worker then as a counselor. I have worked with the unprivileged children behind closed doors. I have heard their pain of being deprived of their language rights which caused a delay in understanding of the world/environment surrounding them. As a counselor, I assisted by clarifying what they experienced and taught coping skills to cope with their loss.

Language deprivation from Deaf and Hard of Hearing children is called child abuse/neglect. Unfortunately, when a Deaf child is born, the parent's first exposure is from the medical providers. In their field of training, the providers are taught to "fix the disability!" rather than first exploring all and potentially the best options for the infant/child.

I hope you will hear our voices and put an end to this needless suffering of language deprivation and allow us the freedom to decide what is best for our Deaf and Hard of Hearing children. Please do not make decisions about us without us.

Thank you for your attention,

*Theresa Miracle*

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