

## Tymber Marsh – Written Testimony

SB444

Good afternoon.

I appreciate the time you've given for my testimony. I'm here to talk about "The Five Percent and the Ninety-Fives Percent." I am a hearing child of a hearing father and two Deaf mothers. My first language is ASL, and my second is English. I am bilingual. Although I don't call her my step mother and my Deaf sister my step sister, for the purposes of clarity, I will use the "step" terminology. My current **step mother** raised me from the age of two and made sure that I valued my bilingual abilities. My parents required me to sign any time Deaf people were around so that they had full access. Like my Deaf step sister, I am a voracious reader. I plan to become an ASL interpreter and support myself through college by interpreting while I study to become a counselor or psychologist.

My profoundly Deaf step sister is now in college studying to become a veterinary doctor. She literally reads 10 to 20 novels per week for pleasure. She won around \$15,000 in college scholarships that paid for her first semester of college at Gallaudet University. She writes better than most hearing people. She does not have a cochlear implant or use hearing aids. She communicates through ASL and printed English. How did she do it? She had access to ASL and English since birth. My step mother started signing and fingerspelling to her the moment she gave birth to her. She surrounded my step sister with books, took her everywhere, even to work while she was a Deaf Mentor Specialist in Utah. They even communicated every day in the car through the rear-view mirror. She's one of the lucky few. She's one of the 5 percent of Deaf people born to parents who used ASL and English with her from birth, providing a normal language acquisition phase early in life.

On the other hand, our **biological mother** was Deaf and used both ASL and written English, but she lived a life of addiction. Consequently, when my father went to work every day and often to a second or third job in the evenings, he was unaware that my brother and I were severely neglected. My brother was enrolled in an early childhood program at the Kansas School for the Deaf from the age of three. The only problem was that our mother consistently either didn't bring him to school, or she would bring him to school several hours late every day. Luckily I had access to spoken English through the television, the radio, and people in the neighborhood, but my brother did not get appropriate language stimulation through ASL or through English literature. He was mostly left in a crib, in a bedroom, or in a fenced yard to play alone. My father was the only one who read books with my brother, but that was only on weekends when he was home. When my father finally found out what was going on, he filed for divorce and got full custody of my brother and me. By then I was two years old, and he was already 4 years old. My Deaf brother should also be part of that 5 percent of babies that have full language access because both parents used ASL and English. Unfortunately, he's actually part of the 95 percent of kids who are language deprived because of simple neglect during the critical period of language acquisition.

Since then my dad remarried a Deaf woman who is quadrilingual and has become a mother to my brother and me. They have done everything they could do to make up for the first 4 years of neglect in my brother's life, but they are still battling the effects of this neglect to this day. My brother is one of the five percent of Deaf children that grew up in a home where everyone used American Sign Language and English. And still, he grew up language deprived because he missed out on that first 4 crucial years of language development that everyone needs to succeed.

Yes, he earned his Eagle Scout, but he had to go through months of drafting to correct his English grammar on forms and how to word emails correctly to a variety of people. Yes, he is fluent in reading and writing English when he has to be, but he absolutely hates to read. Yes, he was recognized this year nationally as an all-star Deaf football player and just recently made the all-tournament team for basketball, but he is several years socially and emotionally behind his same-aged peers because of the gaps in Maslow's Hierarchy. Yes, he is passing all of his classes in school as a junior, but my parents have to stay on top of him weekly to make sure he finishes all of his homework. Yes, he will graduate, but he states that he is afraid to leave KSD.

95% of D/HH children in the state of Kansas are not kindergarten ready because they don't have parents who sign or don't have appropriate community or in-home services to address language deprivation before it starts. In my brother's case, he had two signing parents and extended family members who signed, but because my

mother neglected him in that crucial first 4 years of life, the effects of language deprivation are still lingering to this day.

I don't want to see Deaf people live off of government subsidies, wasting our tax dollars, when they could be productive citizens, contributing to society. Voting for this bill can help 100% of D/HH children be kindergarten ready through assessing and tracking language milestones in development. You can't directly help my brother right now, but you can save thousands of Deaf and Hard of Hearing kids just like him for years to come by preventing language deprivation.

Thank you