

Testimony for Public Hearing

Kansas Senate, Education Committee

March 8, 2016

SB No. 444 (Committee) – On establishing an assessment program for deaf and hard-of-hearing children in Kansas.

My name is Scott Plummer, and I am a product of the preK-12 deaf education system in Kansas, and a father of three deaf kids

I wholeheartedly support this SB #444 because of the following reasons:

- 1. My wife's experience as a kindergarten teacher a couple of years ago, she said there is a large influx of deaf children of language deprivation in Kansas, and they attended KSD for the first time. She said it is unbelievable. However, It is still happening today since my older deaf kids (4 and 6 yrs old) are attending KSD. Many new students are severely language delayed both in English and American Sign Language. I tried to communicate with them, and I know how bad it is. That is something we must support this bill.*
- 2. My experience as a school age (preK- senior) at Kansas School for the Deaf . There is a huge group of developmental delay in language among deaf peers. They are dealing with my peers' cognitive, behavioral, emotional, or social skills. recalled there are many mental health folks and social workers dealing with them. I always question myself it is because of their parents? their former schools? There is a small percentage of deaf peers who are like me.*
- 3. According to the source, many deaf children' mental health will be impacted by language deprivation. A recent study conducted in a specialty deaf inpatient psychiatric unit found that 75% of deaf individuals were non-fluent in American Sign Language (Black & Glickman, 2006). Reference: Black, P. & Glickman, N.S. (2006). Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education. 11(3): 303-321.*
- 4. Language deprivation among deaf people created the lifetime costs for the government \$2.1 billion dollars. It cost indirectly which include the value of lost wages when a person cannot work or is limited in the amount or type of work he or she can do, will make up 63% of the costs of 2.1 billion dollars, according to the CDC.gov. See <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/hearingloss/data.html>*
- 5. College graduation - 5.1% of the deaf or hard-of-hearing population graduated from college. (1,275 deaf college graduates out of approx 25,000 annually). Obviously, language deprivation lowered the percentage. My college friends become doctors, lawyers, and scientists. It is because of their language and parents' involvement. I am a scientist (meteorologist and chemist). I am grateful to my deaf parents and my school what they did for me. I wish it happened to other deaf students, too.*

6. *My deaf grandfather learned English when he was 7 years old. He barely read and write. When he was 88 years old, the heart surgeon told him that his aorta needs to be repaired. My grandfather gave him a green light to repair his heart. After the surgery, his lungs were filled with fluids. Doctors told us he had aspiration pneumonia. The heart surgeon said he was not supposed to have this surgery because he was diagnosed that he has pulmonary fibrosis three years before. If doctor knows about his case, he would not have him this surgery. My grandfather could have prevented from this happening, but he had a difficult time to understand the ASL interpreter because of his delayed language in both languages: ASL and English. He did not aware of his type of illness. Language Deprivation actually killed him here in Kansas.*
7. *As a father of three kids, do we really have an accountability or a tracking system for my deaf children as their primary disability and their language in English and American Sign Language (they are formally recognized as a language)? I see nothing on any document in this state. Deaf students often fall into development delayed category, and they are labeled as developmentally delayed as their primary disability, which seems high in Kansas comparing to other states. The system in Kansas apparently overlooked deaf as their primary disability. This bill will increase the accountability to keep tracking each deaf infant, toddler and child.*

*Please vote "Yes" on this bill for the sake of our deaf and hard-of-hearing children in Kansas
Thank you!*

Scott Plummer