

February 16, 2016

Senators
Kansas State Capitol Room
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Ks 66612

To: Senators,

I am not able to present to testify, but would like to submit my testimony in support of SB 444 (creating a language assessment program for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.)

I am one of those few Deaf who was richly blessed in America Sign Language at very early age because my parents are Deaf. So I did not have the frustrating experience of all the communication difficulties not having much language and then trying to attend the Deaf School where sign language is used. I was able to freely flow in learning in almost all academic areas. I was well prepared for interacting with my peers because of early language acquisition. I remembered seeing some deaf students who were delay in language and therefore struggle to have good successes academically and with their peers. I remembered those times when some of my friends would make comments about how they envied at my abilities to creatively communicate with America Sign Language stories and entertain them. It was having the base language that suited me most that made any of this possible. So, I am trusting that you can appreciate how critical it is for a child for YEARS to have accessing to acquiring a base language.

Kansas School for the Deaf has an amazing program for the Early Childhood Center where I even worked for a few years. During my time there, I witnessed deaf toddlers who didn't have accessing to the first most suitable language to them. The teachers and staffs were willing to work harder to invest language in them, but as you might imagine the older they become without a means for even simple and certainly any significant communication can even be very difficult even to watch. As I consider these things it seems clear to me to be a devastating failing of these children to withhold the opportunity for the most suitable language for communication and learning also putting them in a tremendously lonely place. With all this in mind I hope it will be your delight and honor to protect these little humans by approving SB #444.

Please vote YES on SB #444! Spokeperson for the bill is Chriz Dally. She can be reached at 925-270-1650.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Soemer