

My name is Matthew Gwynn. I have been working for over 35 years with deafness and the Deaf community in a variety of positions, such as being a case manager, doing targeted marketing for communications companies, and teaching at community colleges I currently work as the Coordinator for services for Deaf students at Johnson County Community College. I'm also a Deaf man, one who grew up in the Deaf schooling systems of the 60s and 70s, and a proud alum of Gallaudet, the only higher education institution where all programs and services are designed for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing. And in many ways, I'm an outsider in my community--I'm lucky to have had the education I've had, to not only have been consistently employed but to do work I enjoy. However, I don't want to be an outsider. I want other Deaf people, and particularly Deaf children, to have access to the same opportunities and quality of education I've had.

I have seen the challenges Deaf people face, both from my own living experience and from those I encounter in my work. I've met hundreds, if not thousands of Deaf people and they struggle, are struggling, to get by. The struggle to have steady decent employment is frequently due to their limited communication ability, often resulting from a lack of accessible education in the early stages of their language development. Deaf children are too frequently denied a chance for proper language development as children, usually because they are denied a chance to have access to ASL, or taught to read and write it ways that cater to Hearing children's sense of language, not Deaf and hard-of-hearing children's. Many community colleges offer remedial courses but these are not designed to meet the language needs of Deaf and hard of hearing students.

I believe SB 444 is a good and necessary step to help Deaf children receive language assessment that will provide proper education and a helping hand the children enrolling in kindergarten and primary school. This early

intervention will make a major difference in the quality of education for Deaf children.