



January 23, 2020

Senate Education Committee
330 SW 10th Avenue
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1504

Dear Esteemed Members of the Senate Education Committee:

In fall of 2019 the University of Kansas Edwards Campus (KUEC) launched the American Sign Language and Deaf Studies (ASLD) program. When the Kansas Board of Regents approved this, it became the only undergraduate degree program in ASL and Deaf Studies in the state and one of less than 30 in the nation. The launch of the ASLD program was one of the largest for our campus in terms of student inquiries. Locally and nationally, people are extremely interested in learning about both the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community as a linguistic-cultural minority and the language in which they primarily use to communicate, American Sign Language (ASL).

The passing of SB 230 will greatly support the work that KUEC has set out to do with our ASLD programs. Specifically we aim to increase the opportunities provided Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind Kansans for accessing services through direct communication rather than having to involve a third-party in highly personal matters, a right which is largely taken for granted by most Kansans. Allowing the Kansas Commission of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH) to develop and administer guidelines for communication access services will go a long way toward lessening barriers faced by our Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind citizens. Our ASLD programs also strive to prepare those interested in the work of ASL/English interpretation. The passage of this bill will support our work in ensuring curriculum development and learner engagement is at the highest standard possible by providing students access to the skills and knowledge necessary to satisfy state registration requirements.

The KCDHH provides crucial expertise and support to the state of Kansas and its institutions, and we appreciate working with them as a partner in professional development for our students. The communities we serve in the ASLD programs at KUEC will benefit from the reaffirmation and clarity granted KCDHH by the passage of this bill.

Sincerely,

David J. Cook, PhD
Vice Chancellor
University of Kansas Edwards Campus