

March 18, 2021

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of SB 185 regarding the parameters of authority for the Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. As a retired teacher of the deaf, working qualified American Sign Language/English interpreter, and parent of a deaf adult, I see first-hand the importance of qualifications and accountability within the interpreting profession. The Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, since its inception, has done an admirable job of ensuring equitable access for Kansans who use signed languages or other avenues of communication access.

Change in society requires change in ASL/English interpreter and communication access providers knowledge and skill. Deaf and Hard of Hearing Kansans are increasingly present everywhere from corporate boardrooms to social service agencies and all places in between. Expanding opportunities require ASL/English interpreters and other communication access providers to increase their skills in order to broaden their scopes of practice. While qualified, skilled ASL/English interpreters and communication access providers who serve in general settings are always needed, there are venues that require specialized skills and knowledge to allow for equitable access. A few of these areas include mental health, legal, and technical environments. Working within these disciplines requires ASL/English interpreters and communication access providers to continuously seek professional development opportunities to gain and hone the skills needed to provide equitable access. With increasing opportunities for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Kansans has come increasing numbers of agencies providing communication access and ASL/English interpreting services. As the state agency responsible for overseeing ASL/English interpreters and communication access providers, KCDHH's ability to register service providers, to set and enforce standards, and to oversee agencies providing service is key to ensuring that communication needs are not a barrier to accessing opportunities and information available to any Kansan.

Thank you for reviewing this bill. I urge you to support SB 185 and continue to address the needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Kansans for equitable access. KCDHH does admirable work and this bill will allow them to continue to provide excellent service ensuring that ASL/English interpreters, communication access providers, and agencies exemplify all that is good about our state.

Sincerely,

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