



3/23/2021

Re: Written testimony in Support of SB 185

Dear Chair Huebert and Committee members,

I am writing in support of SB 185, relating to the Kansas commission for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing.

Our membership includes about 1000 speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and faculty members who teach communication sciences and disorders. Serving members of the deaf community is a huge part of our profession.

The deaf and hard-of-hearing community are underserved in terms of access to communication in our state. The Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing needs further guidance written in legislation to carry out its necessary duties to improve access.

Ensuring sign language interpreters are qualified and registered is of utmost importance. Too many times, deaf citizens are forced to rely on family members to interpret in medical settings and courtrooms. Family members are not adequate interpreters (in most cases). Knowing sign language is NOT the same thing as knowing how to interpret. Interpreters are well-educated and trained professionals. This bill will ensure that appropriate interpreters are secured for access to the medical appointment/hospitalization.

Background checks and fingerprinting are essential to protecting deaf and hard-of-hearing citizens. Many summer camps exist for young deaf people, and the interpreters on-site MUST be properly vetted. Those with a criminal history or those who are on the sex offender registry list shall NOT be permitted to work with young deaf children.

I urge you to take a step forward in supporting communication access, quality interpreters, and ensuring safe interactions among interpreters and the deaf community by passing SB 185.

Sincerely,

Susie Ternes

Susie Ternes, AuD, CCC-A
Executive Director