

Written Testimony of:

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Testimony on:

Senate Bill 185 - Clarifying the Authority of the KCDHH
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Chair Huebert and Members of House Education Committee:

I'm writing this letter on the behalf of Nexus Interpreting and as an interpreter myself, to express my support in the passing of SB 185. As an agency owner, and an interpreter, I strive to meet the standards already laid out in this proposed bill. The passing of this bill will help solidify the high standards we have set for our interpreters when they are working out in the community and ensuring that the deaf community receive fair and equal access to communication. All of the interpreters that we currently work with already meet the standards laid out in SB 185 and this will ensure that I will be able to obtain more qualified interpreters because this will give incentive for those on the cusp of entering our field with proper certification, the push to achieve it.

My biggest battle with uncertified interpreters is there are still some entities that hire those interpreters because they are "cheaper" than a full registered/certified interpreters. This only causes harm to the deaf community because this does not allow them to have an adequate voice when meeting with potential or current employers. They can be misrepresented by the interpreter and this does not come to light until later when they decide to hire a qualified interpreter. By then, the damage is done between the deaf employee and their employer. The same could be said regarding medical appointments or any type of transactions. Vital information can be missed and the deaf consumers could be consenting to a procedure or an agreement without having being fully informed of their rights or potential side effects that can be detrimental to them.

Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, KCDHH, has been charged by the deaf community to uphold those standards. SB 185 is a safeguard to the state certification

KCDHH perviously administered. For many years, KCDHH used to administer testing to acquire certification. With new standards of testing, it is not feasible or cost effective for one state to have to continually maintain a certification test. Therefore, the switch to a national standard was the way to go. Especially with KCDHH being allowed to have the right to discern which testing systems out there are reliable. There is another testing system called the BEI, which is currently provided in Missouri, that KCDHH does recognize as another avenue to gain registration status within the state of Kansas.

By not passing this bill, you show that you're only showing your support to the few interpreters that this bill will impact and disregarding the support the Deaf community deserves. KCDHH has laid out several steps to encourage those who have recently graduated from college or have not obtained certification yet, these provide the proper guidance to becoming certified.

Also, the passage of this bill does not affect the ability of education interpreters who take the EIPA to become certified within the educational system. In fact, several times, there are community interpreters that are pulled into the educational system to be subs for those educational interpreters. As of right now, there are no standards in place that ensures schools are utilizing qualified interpreters, let alone, interpreters who would pass a background check. You can see the potential harm that we are opening up to the schools. As well as the harm of leaving the deaf children to be targeted by predators because of the shared common language and the ability to control the narrative if the child is trying to express themselves.

If you pass this bill, this shows the deaf community that you believe they should have their voices heard. You would be upholding the standards that interpreters should already be following and are practicing in other states.