



KRISTEN O'SHEA
STATE OF KANSAS
SENATOR

Chairman Hilderbrand and Senate Public Health & Welfare Committee,

I testify in favor of Senate Bill 343: Updating the term "hearing impaired" to "hard of hearing" in statutes related to persons with hearing loss.

Sarah Hale, my constituent, came to me a year ago with the hopes to change the law to the correct term "deaf" or "hard of hearing" instead of "hearing impaired." We discussed other states who had made this change and agreed that policy change was a good step in the right direction, but only one piece of the puzzle. A large part of this challenge with language will also require educating the public. You can see below in my testimony some of the educational graphics we intend to use and share with other legislatures around the state.

We also wanted to ensure by changing the language there weren't unintentional medical ramifications and so we've worked with the Kansas Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the revisors to ensure these language changes don't cause issues with the original intentions of the bill.

Finally, since introducing this bill we included another stakeholder in the conversation, Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association and they are bringing the following friendly amendments:

Pg. 3, line 24---- Replace speech and hearing conditions and diseases with speech, language, and hearing disorders

Pg. 11, line 7---- Replace speech or language impairments with speech or language disorders

Pg. 15, line 2 ---- Replace speech and hearing conditions and diseases with speech, language, and hearing disorders

Pg. 17, line 37---Replace speech or language impairments with speech or language disorders

I am thankful for my opportunity to work with some of the individuals in our Kansas deaf community and commend their work. I respectfully ask that this committee pass SB 343 favorably.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kristen O'Shea".

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"Deaf" is a simple, neutral, nonjudgmental term denoting people who use their eyes to communicate via sign language and other visually-based means (such as text and open captions).

"Hearing-impaired" is a supposedly more "polite" term than "deaf." We find it offensive, as it defines us in terms of what we lack. It labels us as broken machinery.



**We're not broken or
not impaired.**

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- "Deaf" does not exclude a sense of pride and identity as members of a linguistic-minority community.
- "Deaf" encompasses language, communication, arts, social relationships, and culture.
- Deaf people resent being defined in terms of malfunctioning auditory machinery.



- "Hearing-impaired" is used as a euphemism for "deaf." We don't need euphemisms to deodorize our reality.
- "Hearing-impaired" is negative labeling, judgmental, and annoyingly vague.
- "Hearing-impaired" is equivalent to the "N-word" in the Black community.