

## Letter of Support

**Date:** February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Bill:** [HF 170 – The Right to a Certified Deaf Interpreter in School](#)

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Dear Chair Youakim and members of the Education Finance committee,

The Minnesota Council on Disability supports House File 170 and urges the members of this committee to do the same.

All students have a right to a world class education in a language they understand best, and this includes American Sign Language through certified deaf interpreters. Students also have a right to an education in the communities and schools of their choice as guaranteed by the Supreme Court Olmstead decision. House File 170 removes barriers to this right and promotes inclusive education by allowing certified deaf interpreters to serve our deaf and hard of hearing students in Minnesota schools. Far too often, students with disabilities are overlooked when education policies are implemented and a simple oversight in our school ASL policies has denied deaf and hard of students the right to an education through a certified deaf interpreter.

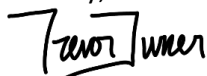
Much like employees are guaranteed workplace accommodations by the Americans with Disabilities Act and Minnesota Human Rights Act, students with disabilities are guaranteed the right to accommodations in the classroom that will help them excel in their academic careers. These accommodations are critical to an inclusive education and help lay a foundation for lifelong success for students with disabilities.

Certified Deaf Interpreters allow deaf and hard of hearing students to learn in the language of their choice and helps them excel academically. It also creates an inclusive educational space for all students by creating a bridge between deaf and non-deaf students, which benefits everyone in the classroom. Deaf and hard of hearing students provide a unique educational perspective that non-deaf students can learn a lot from themselves. Certified deaf interpreters allow deaf and hard of hearing students to share their unique perspective with their peers and all students who are exposed to different languages and alternative methods of learning benefit not just academically but in life experience as well.

The Minnesota Council on Disability supports any effort to create a more inclusive, integrated K-12 educational experience, to which House File 170 contributes. House File 170 gives deaf and hard of hearing students an additional tool to them stay in the classroom of their choice. We at the Minnesota Council on Disability urge members of this committee to support House File 170 and support our deaf and hard of hearing students.

Thank you, Chair Youakim and members of the committee.

Sincerely,



Trevor Turner

Public Policy Director