

## Kyah Kitchen's Written Testimony for HB 5836

To Chairwoman Crawford and the members of the House Committee on Families, Children and Seniors,

Thank you for the opportunity today so I can be an advocate for the Deaf community and the HB 5836.

My name is Kyah Kitchen and I was born Deaf in 1996, however I was not diagnosed with profound deafness until 1997. I have been blessed with such wonderful, open minded parents who recognized the importance of having strong language foundation. They knew that English would not be my first language but American Sign Language instead. My parents' biggest concern for their only Deaf child in the family was communication barriers.

As a family in Oakland County, we were very fortunate to have access to different resources including home services that would strengthen my language development. I did not learn English until few years later, however it did not affect my language development or communication ability. Instead, I became bilingual.

I am here today because I wanted to inform that not every Deaf child and their family had or will have same opportunity as my family and I did. Not every parents of their Deaf child or children will have full access to all resources available to learn either English or ASL. Some families have been denied the resources they need to improve their children's language developments. Those children experienced language deprivation. I've seen the aftermath when those Deaf children without the resources they needed, go to school only to become further behind academically. Throughout my school years until high school graduation, I've seen my own peers being denied opportunities to move forward due to their language deprivation.

If they all had the same opportunities by having access to resources to expand their language development before they start kindergarten, I am sure that they would not experience so much difficulties.

I am a recent college graduate from Oakland University with a BA in psychology and plan on going to graduate school to earn my MSW. I have been recently hired by Deaf C.A.N!, an amazing agency that is committed

to serve and advocate for the Deaf community in Michigan. It is my life goal to protect and serve the Deaf community especially the children.

I have been involved with the Lead-K core team in the past few years. We support this bill because it will help prevent the future Deaf generations from having to experience the effects of language deprivation in their lifetimes. Instead, they would be able to thrive just as I did. Those children have every right to have strong language development just as I did back in 1997.

Thank you for your time,  
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