



Michigan Hands & Voices  
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Dear House Members,

I stand before you all today not only representing myself as a parent of a child who is Deaf, but I stand here today on behalf of families in Michigan with children who are Deaf, DeafBlind or Hard of Hearing (D, DB, HH). Throughout the last 10 years, I have worked with families throughout our state supporting their needs. The nature of my job is to step in when families are at the end of their ropes with regards to the educational system as it stands today not meeting the needs of their unique child who is D, DB or HH. Why are they frustrated? They are looking for help from school personnel assigned to support our children. Unfortunately, often these individuals do not always have the appropriate training and knowledge to know how to support our children due to the complexity of this very disability. My hope is that today with these two new bills focussing on specific language development for children who are D, DB or HH, families will receive the support they need to make intelligent and informed decisions. I also hope that these Bills will provide the much needed training and support to school personnel throughout our entire state who will be or are working with our children.

It is due time that we recognize that every child who is Deaf, DeafBlind or Hard of Hearing deserves an equal opportunity to be able to succeed in school and life. That begins with giving them the very foundation of our humanness which is language and the ability to communicate with one another. Helen Keller was once asked which she rather be blind or deaf? Her response was that she would rather be blind. Why might you ask? Helen Keller explained that to be blind meant she would be separated from things. Being deaf meant she would be separated from people. Please help our children who are Deaf, DeafBlind or Hard of Hearing in Michigan have access to appropriate supports needed to access language and communication. It is at the core of our humanity and what can help them to live successful, productive lives. Please support House Bill 5158 and 5159.

Sincerely,

Janel Frost  
Director  
Michigan Hands & Voices

