

Testimony of:

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House Education Committee Chair Huebert and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of SB 185 Clarifying the authority of the Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH). I am honored to be serving my second year on the KCDHH representing the perspectives and interests of interpreters working in Kansas and as committee chairperson for the Interpreter Review Committee. Prior to my appointment as Commissioner I served KCDHH as a committee member for several years working to clarify and define a fair and ethical interpreting registry system that will ensure Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf Blind (DHHDB) Kansans have equitable access via qualified interpretation.

An effective registration system requires guidelines and criteria that both protect the rights of DHHDB individuals ensuring no harm will be done to them by way of unethical and unqualified interpreters while also providing a fair and equitable system available to individuals desiring to do the work of interpreting. This is a responsibility of the Commission that we take very seriously. As you may suspect, the work of interpreting is quite complex and requires more than being fluent in both English and American Sign Language (ASL). Interpreters must possess specialized knowledge and skills that allow them to facilitate communication access in settings including deeply personal and intimate spaces, high-stakes, life-changing interactions, as well as public events.

I would like to quote Bill Millios, a Deaf man who presented about the “Power of Conscious Vulnerability” at a well-known conference for interpreters:

“Interpreters have been in my life from childbirth to funerals, and everything in between. I remember a story by a friend, he talked about his very first photo – when he was born, the photo taken was of him, his mother ... and the interpreter who was there for the birth. So, my questions for interpreters are, “Do you recognize the impact you have on the lives of Deaf people? Do you realize the access you have to another person’s life? Have you as individuals ever consciously made yourself vulnerable to that degree? Have you ever put your lives in someone else’s hands, like Deaf people do every day? Have you ever had to trust someone as much as we trust our interpreters?””

Later in his presentation he addresses the importance of certification for interpreters:

“...we cannot ignore that Certification with the EPS [Ethical Practices System] provides protection for the Deaf consumer. If a given interpreter chooses not to be certified, then I am not protected, my children are not protected, no Deaf consumers are protected.”

[\(https://streetleverage.com/live\\_presentations/sign-language-interpreters-identifying-the-power-of-conscious-vulnerability/\)](https://streetleverage.com/live_presentations/sign-language-interpreters-identifying-the-power-of-conscious-vulnerability/)

Mr. Millios captures key elements of the transactions between Deaf people and interpreters well. It falls on the shoulders of the KCDHH to maintain a registration system that protects Deaf Kansans while also supporting the integrity of the interpreting profession.

It is unreasonable to expect employers, medical professionals, service providers and consumers to understand the complexities of vetting interpreter skills to ensure they have hired a qualified interpreter. The KCDHH has the expertise necessary to ensure a system that minimizes potential harm and barriers of access for all parties while also supporting individuals striving to achieve and maintain the skills and knowledge needed to provide the essential service of ASL/English interpretation.

We need your support of this bill so that KCDHH can uphold and carryout the honorable responsibility of protecting all Kansans; including Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind individuals.

Thank you for your time and consideration.  
Respectfully,

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