

March 20, 2021

To whom it may concern,

My name is Peter Boklund and my wife, Christina Boklund, and I are co-owners of Boklund Interpreting Services, an interpreting agency local to Wichita, KS. I am a nationally certified interpreter (NIC: National Interpreter Certification) and I believe strongly in the standardization of interpreting services that meet a reasonable minimum qualification for the safety of our Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) community and I do not feel current practices within my field are meeting up to the expectations of what our community desires. With this being said, I am strongly in support of SB 185 to allow the Kansas Commission of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDDH) the appropriate authority to effectively regulate my profession.

I have several concerns and I say that community expectations are not being met due to the testimonies I have heard from our D/HH community. I see poor practices performed by some in our field that I strongly believe can cause harm to the lives of the D/HH that depend on quality interpreting services. In response to the damage that I see within my field, my wife and I responded to this crisis by creating an interpreting agency that could help support our community through quality interpreting services with respect to certification and with respect to KCDHH. Time and time again, my agency has relied on KCDHH and we are thankful for the limited help they are able to offer; however, if KCDHH were to be granted more authority over my profession, this would mean so much to me and several others who abide by ethical industry standards. I know without a doubt that we can see more positive influences happening within our community by passing SB 185.

There are some misconceptions about the passing of SB 185 that I hope I can provide a healthy perspective upon. Concerns range from struggles of passing certification tests for ED K-12 interpreters to the fear of interpreters losing their jobs within ED K-12 or within community work. While a valid concern when looked through a limited perspective, I find that these types of concerns are not based on a healthy, holistic view of what our profession needs. I am experienced as an interpreter within freelance (community jobs) as well as ED K-12 and I heartily believe otherwise. Regarding Ed K-12, what I have found is that the lower you place the bar, there are some interpreters who will satisfy the minimum and nothing more. Over time, I have come to call this type of interpreter the "Clock-in, Clock-out" interpreter because their focus is simply to be paid as a warm body present between start and end times,

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their focus is simply to be paid as a warm body present between start and end times, yet they have little to no focus on how they are affecting the lives of the students they work with because of their lack of motivation to strengthen their skill set for clear communication. 90% of D/HH children are born to hearing families with the majority of them who do not use American Sign Language in their households. This would logically conclude that the majority of their language acquisition during prime time for language exposure has been channeled through their school interpreters who are often under-qualified. With lack of adequate communication, these D/HH individuals miss out on a plethora of opportunities that would have been offered to them otherwise if they had strong language models in the first place. What does this mean? Stemming from unqualified Ed K-12 interpreters, D/HH members, as they grow older, can lose out on job opportunities, have more difficulty understanding medical diagnoses due to language development gaps, or from a testimony of a certified-legal interpreter, have higher risk of finding themselves in a courtroom due to misunderstandings of which could have easily been prevented from a qualified interpreter in earlier years. Certification levels for ED K-12 are higher in other states and interpreters are successfully meeting these requirements without the fear of losing their jobs. In honesty, not every practicing interpreter should remain in the profession if they are not able to successfully perform their job duties which is compliant to our Code of Professional Conduct from RID-NAD.

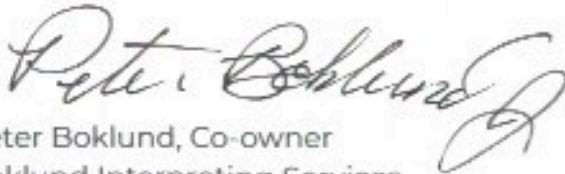
To provide an example of why I feel as concerned as I do, we can apply these misconceived concerns to another profession that I believe may be more relatable: the medical field. As practicing interpreters, we find ourselves in every type of situation that you can imagine and that includes us working hand-in-hand with lawyers, schools, and doctors. For most patients, they place a unique trust in the doctor they are working with because we find ourselves in a vulnerable situation where we must place our lives and health in the hands of someone other than ourselves. The conundrum is that your doctor has not passed their credentialing requirements or has extremely low scores allowing them to barely pass credentialing requirements and he/she is asking to perform life-threatening surgery on you. Most rational people would refuse to accept these services. I don't view this to be any different for the interpreting profession when we as interpreters can positively or negatively affect the lives of the people we work with. I am sure it is reasonable that you would not want to have that doctor to perform surgery on you and I find that same logic must be applied to unqualified interpreters.

Rather, those that are in fear of losing their jobs will find the motivation they ought to have had for quite some time to better their skillset just like our Code of

Professional Conduct encourages us to do. Instead of people losing their jobs, we will find more interpreters putting in the effort that they were supposed to put forth since the beginning and serve our community as originally intended. If an unqualified interpreter truly struggles after ample realistic effort, then it is best that they choose another profession. There are several other professions that are easily accessible to people who have hearing privilege thus ceasing the continual oppression to our D/HH community in the name of fear and concern of losing an interpreting job. This misaligned reasoning only ignores the concerns of the D/HH community. I have seen too many stories of how a Deaf or Hard of Hearing person has been negatively impacted because of the incompetence of an unqualified interpreter. There are qualified interpreters available and we find ourselves losing jobs to unqualified interpreters who should not be in these assignments. I, as a practicing interpreter and interpreting agency, have lost jobs to unqualified interpreters several times and with KCDHH having proper authority, I believe this can only empower our community.

SB 185 is not something to glaze over and to be brushed to the side. Allowing KCDDH the appropriate authority they request will free up a lot of the issues we are seeing in our state. In every profession, there needs to be some sort of accountability and maintenance. I believe in the vision of KCDHH and their goals align with that of my own as an individual and as an interpreting referral agency. I currently am seeing harm to the community I am doing my very best to serve and I believe that with the passing of SB 185, it will cause more motivation for current practicing interpreters to meet healthy minimum standards and remove interpreters who are causing damage to the community. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Peter Boklund, Co-owner
Boklund Interpreting Services