

Written Testimony in support of Senate Bill 230
House Education Committee hearing
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Chairman Huebert and members of the committee:

Thank you for allowing me time to share my support of this crucial legislation.

I have had the honor and privilege of working as an ASL/English interpreter since 1986. I have been nationally certified since 1991 and moved to Kansas from Colorado in 2002 to teach at JCCC in the Interpreter Training Program. This past summer I thrilled to say I transitioned to KU Edwards Campus to help launch an exciting new undergraduate program in ASL & Deaf Studies.

In 2010 I worked with the Kansas Commission of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH) to revise regulations overseeing interpreters and discontinue the state quality assessment tool that was no longer serving its original purpose. We worked closely with the Deaf and interpreting communities and made many improvements. However, due to limitations that are addressed in this bill, we continue to face barriers in terms of the authority to act on behalf of communities whom we represent and serve.

As interpreters we find ourselves in aspects of people's lives that range from intimate, private events including the birth of a baby, marital counseling, cancer diagnosis, performance evaluations to public events including graduation ceremonies, presidential addresses, emergency alerts and concerts and everything in-between. In all of these settings we are a third party – not the professionals who bring necessary expertise; not the person whose life this pertains to – we are the person there solely to facilitate communication access. This is both an incredible honor and grave responsibility.

Facilitating communication access is a task that, at minimum, requires one to have exceptional fluency in the languages and cultures at hand. However, communication between individuals is always embedded in context and shared experiences. So, it is much more than language and culture. Decisions must be made about meaning, intent, consequence, delivery and more. As we are faced with these decisions, we must remain objective and ethical. It is crucial that we are held to the utmost confidence, ethics and standards. It is crucial that we are supported in our efforts to maintain and develop our skills. It is crucial that we are overseen and credentialed by stakeholders who truly understand the complexities at hand. The passage of SB 230 will grant the Kansas Commission of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing the appropriate authority to do this work in the best interest of our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my support of Senate Bill 230.