

January 23, 2020

**Re: Testimony in support of SB 230**

From: Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (KSHA)  
Susie Ternes (Executive Director) & Kris Pedersen (SLP Legislative Liaison)

Dear Chair Baumgardner and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address SB 230, serving to improve access to qualified sign language interpreters and provide coordination and guidelines for communication access services.

The Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (KSHA) is a professional organization comprised of over 1000 Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists across the state of Kansas. KSHA extends our support for SB 230, which clarifies the role and authority of the Kansas Commission for the Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing.

Our members collaborate with interpreters serving individuals with hearing loss across the lifespan and in various settings. To ensure consumer protection and provide equal access to spoken communication, it is essential that sign language interpreters be registered, which requires applicants to provide evidence of their credentials. As with other professionals who serve children in educational and health care settings, interpreters must go through background checks and fingerprinting for the safety and well-being of consumers. Conducting background checks during the registration process will reduce barriers to accessing services in a timely manner.

SB 230 also improves our state's compliance with both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by adding a program to provide guidelines for the utilization of communication access services. This is critical for individuals who have barriers to accessing spoken language, including individuals with hearing loss and those with impairments in speech/language.

Communication access services such as captioning services, realtime translation, and notetakers are essential for individuals who are deaf/hard of hearing to fully access aurally delivered information. In addition, individuals who are deaf-blind need specialized supports provided by qualified communication access service providers who must also undergo background checks and act in accordance with a code of professional conduct.

Given the importance of language acquisition for children who are D/HH, and to be inclusive of *all* individuals with communication challenges, we respectfully ask that references to "speech impaired" (pg 6, line 35; pg 7, line 2; page 7, line 4; pg 7, line 23-24; pg 7, line 34-35; pg 8, line 6) be changed to individuals who "have speech and language impairments."

KSHA appreciates this opportunity to ensure Kansans with communication challenges have appropriate access to communication so they make thrive in the classroom, workplace, and the community.

Sincerely,

Susie Ternes, AuD, CCC-A  
Executive Director

Kris Pedersen, SLPD, CCC-SLP  
Legislative Liaison