

Testimony of:

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Kansas Department for Children and Families

Testimony on:

Senate Bill 343 – Referring Deaf and Hard of Hearing
March 7, 2022

Chair Landwehr and Members of House Committee on Health and Human Services:

Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH) supports SB 343.

KCDHH is a state agency housed administratively within the Department for Children and Families (DCF) and based in Topeka. KCDHH works with agencies and organizations throughout Kansas to assure availability and coordination of services for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, including communication access and resources related to hearing loss.

KCDHH is governed by a 17-member Commission, of which there are five ex-officio members representing key state agencies and twelve at-large members appointed by the Governor. The positions taken and expressed by the Commission do not necessarily represent the views or positions of DCF or individual member agencies. The Commission met on January 14, 2022 and voted to support SB 343.

KCDHH was first established in 1982 as the Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired (KCDHI). In 1992, at the request of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community, the State Legislature changed the name to KCDHH. Unfortunately, the change in 1992 was not comprehensive enough to include necessary changes to other existing statutes that reference “hearing impaired,” as the preference is to be called either hard of hearing or individuals with hearing loss, if they are not being identified as Deaf.

KCDHH has always put an emphasis on how public officials are in a unique position to convey positive images of people with disabilities, including individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. As a general rule, it is proper when referring to a person with a disability or disabilities by putting the person first and then using a positive reference such as “a person with a hearing loss.” Individual(s) may prefer you to refer to them as deaf or hard of hearing. This consideration was cited in 2017 KCDHH’s publication, *Quick Guide for Kansas Public Employees on Accommodating Deaf and Hard of Hearing* and it also mirrors another resource, *Guidelines: How to Write and Report About People with Disabilities, Research and Training Center on Independent Living, University of Kansas, 8th Edition (2013)*. Both resources also ask everyone not to refer to anyone as a “hearing-impaired person.”

KCDHH thanks you for your consideration and support of this SB 343.