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April 5, 2016

To: Ann Pugh, House Human Services Committee Chair and members of the  
Committee

From: Bill Hudson, DAIL State Coordinator, Deaf/Hard of Hearing Services

RE: April 5th Testimony regarding S.66 re-draft.

The Vermont Council for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf/Blind was put together per request by the Senate Government Operations Committee last year towards recognizing service needs for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf/Blind Vermonters and of S.66. Throughout this process the Council has recognized the need to take extra steps and go further with our work to not only recognize school age children but to visit the broader picture involved, the lifespan of services from birth to elderly. The Council arranged members into 4 sub-committees; birth-3 age, school age, adults and elders. By reviewing and assessing on current and needed services within, each sub-committee has the ability to work on establishing recommendations.

With this in mind, the Council identified areas requiring modifications to the original S.66 bill; to continue this Advisory Council and expand the S.66 focus not just on school age children but beyond from birth to elderly.

- Continue the Advisory Council as a formal governing authority. Replace the sunset date with yearly reports to the Legislature.
  - The work tailors to a wide-spread array of services that this Council recognizes as essential needs among the 4 sub-committee groups mentioned above.
  - The existence of this Council will work with State government and the grassroots community to review and access support to strengthen services for full access, diversity, and to promote awareness for lifespan development.
  
- Definitions of hearing loss:
  - Communication or language mode.
  - Deaf
  - Hard of Hearing
  - Deaf/Blind

Each individual above has their own mode of communication needs that works best for them. It is important to remove "hearing impairment" label. Age groups will show hearing loss impacts in similarities and as individuals according to age as well.



- Birth to age 3, and school age children:  
The sub-committee identifies that children and families need more resources and service support. Identifying, giving choices of language and communication, are just the beginning. Maintaining data, what are the outcomes, how measured, how are our children doing over the years needs tracking.
- The Council would benefit from data and numbers on the hearing loss population as we only go with the national statistics estimate for the state. Data will tell us who we are working with, and track outcomes.

A lot of effort went into this revision of S.66 among departments of state agencies and the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf/Blind communities. I know that my Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living and the Agency of Human Services supports this S.66 version.

Thank you for this opportunity-



Bill Hudson

