

**S-66**

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**Background**

As a former employee for Department of Aging and Independent Living (DAIL), I was the State Coordinator of Services for the Deaf (SCD) for 15 years. I have seen the birth and death of the first Commission for the Deaf and so call director of the Deaf within DAIL. In my observation I think leadership and supervision were lacking back then. Lack of guidance from DAIL and the advisory group.

**Oversight**

I am in support of this bill, S66, however there is a need to spell out the duty of the Commission for the Deaf. Need assessments, data collection and action plans for the future. Reports and recommendations should be report back to Vermont State Legislature for possible need actions.

**Addition to the Bill**

Specific population missing in the bill and it should be written in. DeafBlind there are needs not met by current service providers or agencies. I been working since 2007 trying to get basic services to individual who are DeafBlind. Example: Support Services Provider program (SSP). This service provide sighted guide, transportation and knowledge of ASL to communicate. We almost started the pilot SSP program via Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing with one time funding from VTrans. But VCDHH uprupted shut down. I quickly asked an organization for the blind to consider adding this service but was not willing to meet and stated that they do e not know how to certified DeafBlind people. I have that dialogue save to justify needs for us, DeafBlind needs. Even seeking funding for such services, I been once told to try Developmental Services. That scare the hell of me assuming that DeafBlind are conscious disability.

Also there are other group with additional disabilities and Deaf who are grossly ignore. This need to address with this legislation to evaluate current issues and provide action plans to improve services needs for this population.

**Education**

No one mentioned education for children who are DeafBlind. The information I have is too much focus on technology. I want to know if they are getting education and language. My view in current education is that they teaching children how to be "hearing" to meet the satisfactory of the "normal world". This worry me for all children who are Deaf, hard of hearing and DeafBlind. Before Federal regulation to mandate children with disabilities to be mainstream in public schools. Austine School for the Deaf had a great education, 58 percent of Austine graduates enter colleges. Today, ask Agency of Education what the number? So far not know.

### **Conclusion**

This bill, I would recommend add a representative who are DeafBlind and a study group to look into individuals who are Deaf with additional disabilities. My hope is that in the future this population will become taxpayers and participant in the society not isolated.

Thank you for your support.

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