



To: Senate Appropriations Committee

The Vermont Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, a member organization of 50 American Sign Language/English interpreters, supports the full funding of S.162 and amended by the Senate committee on Government Operations to establish a position for the Deaf, hard of hearing, and DeafBlind Services Director. This position would fill the gap of coordinating the currently siloed services between the Agency of Human Services and the Agency of Education. Most importantly, this position would serve the larger Vermont community of service providers, businesses, families, and individual citizens who interact with deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing individuals.

As interpreters, we are the only providers who interact with signing individuals from cradle to grave life events. We are there when babies are born. We are there when family members are laid to rest. We are there when someone is offered the job opportunity of a life time and when they are given a terminal diagnosis. We also bear witness to the mundane; the things that keep us connected and engaged in our community, town meeting, weekly staff meetings, performances at the local school, open forums on a proposed policy, just to name a few.

In our work as an interpreter we provide communication access and connection between two people who do not share a language. That is our main responsibility. Unfortunately, we also are asked to be a clearing house for information and referral or technical assistance to the non-signing service provider. This action is outside of our scope of work and could be conceived to be in violation of the Code of Professional Conduct of our certifying body, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

While our focus is on working with signing, deaf individuals we also see an increasing need for services that are sensitive to an aging population that is dealing with age related hearing loss.

A Deaf, hard of hearing, and DeafBlind Services Director, a position that was previously held within state government, would serve as a one stop shop and clearing house to ensure that service providers are getting the coordinated support they need to serve Deaf, hard of hearing, and DeafBlind individuals.

The legislation calls for a shared position between AHS, AOE and DAIL at the cost of \$89,347.00 in FY2020 for the purpose of establishing the position of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Services Director pursuant to 33 V.S.A. § 1603.

We strongly stand behind the recommendation of the Governor's Council for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind, the Vermont Association of the Deaf, and the Vermont Center on Disabilities Rights in supporting **full** funding of S.162 as amended by the Senate Committee on Government Accommodations.