

To Legislators on the proposed cuts to the Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of Directors and the membership of the Connecticut Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (CRID), which is Connecticut's nonprofit professional association of sign language and oral interpreters/transliterators for the Deaf.

CRID understands that the Governor has proposed merging the Connecticut Commission for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI) with the Department of Social Services (DSS). We, the Board and membership of CRID, believe this will be highly detrimental to the nearly 300,000 Deaf and Hard of Hearing citizens of Connecticut.

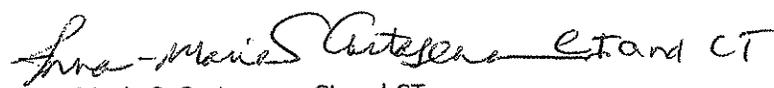
CDHI has been an integral part of the community for over 35 years. We believe that it should remain an independent entity in order to continue its work in serving the over 298,000 Deaf and Hard of Hearing citizens of Connecticut. This service is more than what is visible when you see interpreters. CDHI staff provides advocacy and support, case management and counseling. Because CDHI staff are fluent in American Sign Language, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals who use their services don't have to rely on a third person, the interpreter, being part of their often personal discussions. CDHI staff also offer orientation seminars on deafness and Deaf culture to various emergency/safety personnel, businesses, schools and various other entities. These educational experiences are presented by people who are familiar with the various obstacles that Deaf citizens face on a daily basis and are invaluable. CDHI staff have also served on Advisory Boards regarding a variety of issues including, but not limited to, early childhood intervention, mental health, education, workplace accessibility, multiculturalism and Deaf/Blind. The most visible and public aspect of CDHI is the interpreting services, but this is only a fraction of what CDHI actually does.

A merger with DSS and the elimination of the advocacy, case management and counseling services would mean that Deaf and Hard of Hearing citizens in Connecticut would be without valuable services that serve to keep them employed and healthy. It would also mean that the case loads for the few Social Workers, case managers and counselors who are fluent in American Sign Language would increase exponentially, placing enormous stress on other agencies, both state and private.

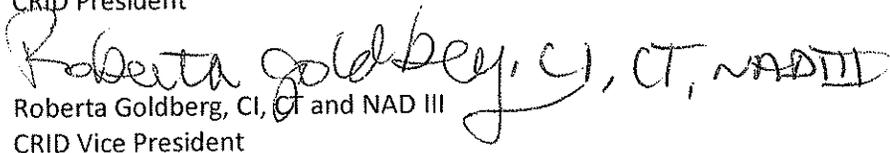
CDHI, CRID, FSW, the Office of Protection and Advocacy (OPA), the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) and many other entities have joined together to ensure communication access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals in hospitals twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. This "task force" has also recognized the need for more qualified professional interpreters in all aspects of our society and has established a number of areas in which we will be working closely in an effort to collaboratively alleviate the critical shortage of interpreters.

In conclusion, CRID wholeheartedly supports CDHI's continued efforts to advocate, strengthen, and implement state policies affecting Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals and their relationship to the public, industry, health care, and educational opportunities available to all citizens of Connecticut. Eliminating CDHI from the state support systems would cause undue burden on other state agencies and ultimately hurt over a quarter of a million Connecticut citizens.

Sincerely,



Anna-Marie S. Cartagena, CI and CT
CRID President



Roberta Goldberg, CI, CT, NAD III
CRID Vice President