

February 17, 2010

Good evening Chairpersons, Senator Toni Harp, Representative John Geragosian and the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Susan V. Pedersen and I am the President of Connecticut Council of Organizations Serving the Deaf (CCOSD). I am here because I am not comfortable with Governor Rell's proposal affecting National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD) under the CT Commission on Culture and Tourism. Connecticut is very fortunate to have the National Theater for the Deaf as one of its precious resources. This is a globally known theater group that makes statewide educational outreach one of their primary missions.

Governor Rell's proposal will directly impact school children across Connecticut who gains tremendously from NTD's programs that introduce students to American Sign Language and deaf culture. This exposure not only sensitizes our Connecticut youth to issues related to our large indigenous Deaf and hard of hearing community but may open future career paths to them. If not for the efforts of NTD, our younger citizens may never have met any deaf people or been aware of the careers that are related to the deaf like teaching, interpreting, and social work.

I have personally witnessed scores of school students across the state as they were thrilled to learn how to communicate in a visual language - **AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE**. I have also seen the look of excitement as they learn that the mastery of American Sign Language can be counted as an equivalent language credit for high school and college. This knowledge arms them with information to make better language choices in high school and make a language in college more accessible.

Last but not least, the NTD also serves a very important purpose for the Connecticut Deaf community's adults and youth by promoting "pride of self". Most deaf people work or attend school in isolation from other deaf individuals and as such, it can be difficult not to feel the forgotten minority. The NTD provides wonderful workshops that foster pride in their unique deaf culture and their expressive American Sign Language. This type of outreach is critical to creating a strong, vibrant deaf community that adds to the diverse fabric of Connecticut.

On behalf of CCOSD consisting more than 20 organizations, I invite you to witness the magic of the National Theater of the Deaf's educational programs as well as their performances. If you do, I promise that you will see the full benefit of their work and you will be convinced that **you should vote against Governor Rell's proposal for National Theatre of the Deaf**. Thank you.

Susan V. Pedersen,

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