

Honorable Senator Toni Harp and Representative Toni Walker, Co –Chairs,  
Appropriations and Committee Members:

Thanks for allowing me to testify on behalf of the Connecticut Association of the Deaf. This is Mike Finneran, President of this organization establishing 70 years ago to protect and serve the deaf and hard of hearing Connecticut residents. Currently there are at least 100 members along with some affiliates.

The community expressed the concerns about the proposed Governor's Bill No. 1012.

We saw and understood Governor Malloy's proposal to decrease the number of agencies across the board due to budget, and appreciate his decision to maintain the services of the Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI). CCOSD via CAD spearheaded the movement to establish CDHI some 40 years ago.

I see the importance of merging some agencies and see that the services may not be impacted by this but I would like to see some leadership to be taken up by Deaf or Hard of Hearing folks. So they can relate with the community members. I would like to see some wordings to be changed from "may" to "shall" in some areas as Sue Pedersen, President of CCOSD mentioned, where Deaf and Hard of Hearing can get the services without having to worry if they will be diminished due to the "law".

The advisory board of 21 members should remain intact as long as the majority of members are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

As you know, the telecommunication portion is very important and accessible to all Deaf and HH folks in the state. The Special Telecommunications Equipment Fund is instrumental to their basic telecommunication needs in the state. I would like to see the continuity of this and more involvement from the community as to what their communication needs are. ie: Can they call 911 via their own equipment such as Captioned telephones or teletypewriter or even texting from their phones? That is something we need to ensure that their communication needs are being met.

Before you make some changes, I personally would like to get involved to appropriately provide the needs within their community – from obtaining an interpreting to finding a job. We are watching very closely to how the bill carries and gives the best interest for the deaf and hard of hearing community's needs.

Again, thanks for eyeing our concerns and we trust you will do what's right for all Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals living in the State of Connecticut. May their lives be blessed by your decision.