



**State of Connecticut**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
STATE CAPITOL  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

**REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPH J. TABORSKAK**  
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**CHAIRMAN**  
GENERAL LAW COMMITTEE

**MEMBER**  
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

March 7, 2011

**HB 6499: An Act Concerning Minor Revisions**

Dear Chairs and Honorable Members of the Education Committee:

Thank you for raising HB 6499, An Act Concerning Minor Revisions To The Education Statutes. This bill includes legislation which will make American Sign Language part of the World Language Department, rather than the Language Arts Department, as our current statute reads.

If adopted, schools which wanted to offer sign language would teach it according to the state's standards for World Language, based on Connecticut's 2005 World Language Curriculum Framework. To compliment this, if sign language is offered in a high school, it could meet the World Language requirements. As American Sign Language is currently considered to be a part of Language Arts, it is not considered to fulfill the requisites for World Languages. Finally, this minor change in categorization will also have no fiscal impact on our budget.

Although Connecticut is one of the most progressive and forward-thinking states in our nation, it is also a part of a minority that classifies American Sign Language under the auspices of the Language Arts Department. According to the National Council of State Supervisions for Languages (NCSSFL), 40 states in the nation already consider American Sign Language as part of the World Language Department and offer both high school and college credit to students who meet certain requirements.

The current standards used by the state to teach American Sign Language are adopted from the 2005 Connecticut World Language Curriculum Framework. The foundations for these standards were adopted from The National Standards in Foreign Language Education study (1996). For both these state and national standards, the recommendations

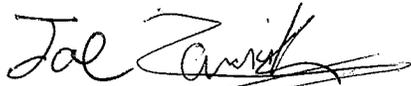
are that sign language be taught as a World Language. If American Sign Language becomes part of World Language, it would be regulated just as any other World Language. As of now, since American Sign Language is currently listed under the Language Arts Department in Connecticut, there are no standards or curriculum for teaching it to students.

Besides offering students a unique way to fulfill their World Language requirements, sign language can also assist dyslexic students in fulfilling their World Language requirements. Other World Language courses are often a challenge for these students because of the heavy amount of textual material covered. However, American Sign Language uses less textual material, instead using video presentation and instructional demonstration as a tool for comprehension and mastery of the language.

Additionally, according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communications Disorders (NIDCD), sign language can enhance certain visual and mental image-processing functions of the human brain. This is extremely beneficial in enhancing a student's learning process and development.

In conclusion, I urge the committee to pass this bill which will enhance and improve aspects of our educational system. I hope you will support a joint favorable report of this measure going forward. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Taborsak", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joe Taborsak