

**TESTIMONY FOR HB No. 5357**  
**An Act Concerning a Deaf Child Bill of Rights**

3/1/2012

My name is Edward F. Peltier and I am the Executive Director of the American School for the Deaf. I have spent close to 40 years in deaf education, as a teacher and administrator. First, I want to comment that the professionals I have worked with over the years all have good intentions, whether from a special program like ASD, another special program or a public school district.

I have been involved for five years with a group of individuals--including professionals from a variety of educational settings, parents, deaf adults and state officials--who explored how to improve the educational performance and outcomes of deaf and hard of hearing children in Connecticut. Significant time and energy has gone into this analysis by this group of dedicated people interested in the education of deaf children in Connecticut. We have identified a 10-step plan to help move things forward. The Deaf Child Bill of Rights is one of those recommendations from this dedicated group of people who know we can do better. We have talked with professionals and parents from other states, we have observed their work by regular participation in the National Summit, an annual conference partially sponsored by the federal Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services. We have come to the conclusion and agreement that we, in Connecticut, need a formal framework--a Deaf Child Bill of Rights--to help ensure that we meet the 'unique communication needs of Deaf children,' specified in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (I.D.E.A.). Our group of professionals, parents, and advocates are all on the same page as we advocate for each child's free appropriate education.

The Deaf Child Bill of Rights, if passed and implemented, will require a quality review of each child's unique communication needs with the active engagement of parents and professionals at the annual Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting. This review, called the Language and Communication Plan, will lead to meaningful discussion and engagement of those in the PPT meeting and, from this process, the services needed for effective, appropriate educational planning.

The 11 other states that have enacted a Deaf Child Bill of Rights advise us that their adoption of a Deaf Child Bill of Rights has established a framework and foundation for enhanced educational performance. We, as well, need to be in the forefront of this and take this opportunity in Connecticut. In 1817, Connecticut officials were in the lead as they provided support for the establishment of the American School for the Deaf and education for Deaf children. In 2012, we have another opportunity to continue and enhance this duty and legacy. Thank You.