

## Written Testimony

March 2, 2012

Dear Committee

I, Kate Graham, parent of Laney Graham, age 2.5 , who is child with profound hearing loss in both ears, who is now implanted bilaterally with cochlear implants, is writing to submit my testimony for Raised Bill No. 5357, AN ACT CONCERNING A DEAF CHILD BILL OF RIGHTS.

This Bill supports that any child identified as deaf or hearing impaired shall include a language and communication plan developed by the planning and placement team. The communication plan is essential to developing an appropriate program for my daughter as we are in the transition process from Birth to 3 into the public school system. Since Laney was implanted on her right side at 21 months, left side at 25 months, and received therapy from a trained professional, we have begun to narrow the wide achievement gap between Laney and her hearing peers. We find it essential that if she is to continue this progress, she needs to have the support of the state of Connecticut behind her as she begins her educational path in our school system. A Deaf Child Bill of Rights would require the (IEP) team to focus on the unique language and communication needs of these children and help to close this wide achievement gap by meeting these needs. We have chosen oral communication with Auditory-Verbal therapy and our daughter is now only 8 months behind her peers. We are hopeful that this bill will afford her the appropriate language and communication plan necessary to continue to close the gap and give her opportunities for direct communication with her peers, be sure her teachers are qualified to work with a child with cochlear implants, give her accessibility through her public school career to the same academic instruction, and to be sure she has appropriate technological and environmental accommodations needed to be successful as she has been thus far.

From personal professional experience, as a Certified Special Education teacher, I know that most school districts do not have the qualified staff to work with students with hearing impairments. Hearing impairments are considered a low incidental disability, and public school staff may not always have the skills, training and qualifications necessary to work with children with this disability nor do they have experience with cochlear implants. It is our hope for our daughter her plan will include a staff member who has this training.

Eleven other states have already passed Deaf Child Bill of Rights legislation, including Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and Delaware.

I strongly urge you to support the Deaf Child Bill of Rights.

I want to thank you for your time in reading my testimony for the Deaf Child Bill of Rights. I wish I could have been at the hearing in person, but due to the significant amount of time Laney's disability has required my family to miss work, I only have a few more "sick" days left in my school year. Thanks for considering my testimony in writing.

Kate Graham

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