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Testimony of Representative Tom Reynolds
Education Committee Public Hearing
March 5, 2012

H.B. 5357 AN ACT CONCERNING A DEAF CHILD BILL OF RIGHTS

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and distinguished members of the Education Committee, I am pleased to submit testimony in support of this committee bill. I appreciate the committee raising the bill in order to help provide a better quality education to deaf or hard of hearing children in Connecticut.

Test scores in Connecticut show that deaf or hard of hearing children, even those with Individualized Education Programs (IEP), are significantly behind in reading, writing and math as compared to their hearing peers. Between 71 and 81 percent of deaf and hard of hearing children did not reach goals for CMT and CAPT assessments as compared to 35 and 58 percent of their hearing peers. A Deaf Child Bill of Rights would require the IEP team to use a Language & Communication Plan as a critical tool to focus on the unique language and communication needs of these children.

Currently the federal Disabilities Education Act requires an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to consider the unique language and communication needs of a deaf or hard of hearing child including opportunities for direct communication with peers; direct instruction in the child's language and communication mode; academic level; full range of needs; and provision of assistive technologies and services. The Deaf Child Bill of Rights would require a Language & Communication Plan to be part of the child's IEP and *effectively implement* the requirement already under federal education law on the state level.

Currently 11 other states have already passed this type of legislation, including Rhode Island, Pennsylvania and Delaware.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill, and I look forward to working on this legislation with this committee to secure its passage.