

*From the desk of
Teresa A. Cherry-Cruz*

My name is Teresa Cherry-Cruz, and I am a licensed certified Speech Language Pathologist, who currently holds an administrator position in an urban public school district. As an Administrator I am responsible for ensuring that all students who are deaf/hearing impaired receive the high quality services required to support them in their abilities to successfully access the general education curriculum. Both our district and school based Planning and Placement Teams adhere to the procedural guidelines specified in IDEA with integrity when making decisions about educational programming and placement for our deaf/hearing impaired students.

With a committed understanding that every deaf/hearing impaired student is a unique individual, all PPT decisions are made solely on their individualized uniqueness. The true commitment this practice often results in some PPT recommendations for our deaf/hearing impaired students to receive their educational instruction in placements outside of the district while other PPT decisions recommend appropriate programs and placements within the district. Our students who remain in district also receive comprehensive Individualized Education Plans that are in alignment with the federal mandates in IDEA. In sincere efforts to support the wide range of communication needs that our deaf/hearing impaired student's exhibit while engaging in a variety of contextual settings within the public school environment, The school district employs experienced interpreters to work in the capacity of Educational Interpreter Tutors.

Based on the high quality standards that state of Connecticut currently upholds for interpreters, the Educational Interpreter Tutors working in our district are educated professionals who have received solid foundational instruction in sign language training from accredited academic institutions. They also have furthered their interpreting skills by participating in comprehensive interpreter training programs under the supervision of licensed certified interpreters who are in compliance with the RID Code of Professional Conduct. Our school system's hiring process is also inclusive of a rigorous screening that assesses the knowledge and understanding of the "how and why" of the teaching and learning practices implemented in urban public schools. Through collaborative efforts of our support personnel staff (administrators, special and general educators, social workers, psychologists, guidance counselors etc...) Educational Interpreter Tutors receive ongoing professional development to enhance their ability to engage in both explicit and implicit interpretation of academic instruction that is critical in supporting the development of the cognitive, metacognitive and social emotional skills that deaf/hearing impaired students need in meeting the Common Core State Standards. In view of the fact that many of our Educational Interpreter Tutors work with students whose communicative needs are further complicated with the presence other cognitive and social emotional disabilities, it is critical that Educational Interpreters possess skills that are diverse enough to support the well-being of the "whole child". To date we are very proud of the academic achievements our deaf/hearing impaired students have made within their in-district school communities.

However, as a licensed and certified professional working with children, families and educators I recognize and fully support the idea of raising the standards for the interpreting profession. Standards across all disciplines are the structural frameworks put in place to verify the provision of quality services. However, the current language of **Raised Bill 6765** has the potential to adversely impact the insurance of quality services specifically within urban public school settings. **Bill 6765** exclusive focus on **mandating a rigid requirement for specific certification** does not take into consideration the need for the flexibility required by school districts to comply with the mandates of IDEA, and thereby contradicts

their ability to provide FAPE to all students with disabilities that require interpreter services as part of their individualized educational plan . Many administrators across school districts can acknowledge the true fact that *"certification is not always synonymous with qualification"*. There are people in the field who are qualified and not certified, and people who are not certified but experienced and qualified to successfully work within the educational environments. The restrictive components of this bill requiring certification to validate only specific skill sets of interpreters, may require the district to hire additional staff to meet the other existing needs that a hearing impaired student may have. The potential of this occurrence will indeed place additional financial burden on school districts that are already under severe financial constraints.

In a close examination of the proposed **Bill 6765** there are many things to consider and I have only highlighted a few that can adversely impact the educational needs of deaf/hearing impaired students, and these few, are a few to many. Therefore I ask you to reconsider passing this bill in its current form. In order for **Bill 6765** to be an effective law there must be inclusive language that will enable schools to appropriately support the interpreting the needs of all deaf /hearing impaired students whose families have chosen to educate their children in the public school settings.

Sincerely,
Teresa Cherry-Cruz M.S. CCC/SLP