

# National Theatre of the Deaf

## Public Testimony before Appropriations Committee

By Gary Greco, Board Member  
March 2, 2015

My name is Gary Greco, and I am a proud Board member of The National Theatre of the Deaf. For more than 40 years, NTD has provided both artistic and educational performances to a wide range of audiences around the world and around the country. This is truly one of Connecticut's cultural crown jewels! NTD continues to perform and educate audiences and more importantly, dispels negative misperceptions about Sign Language and Deafness.

I want to explain to you all who serve on the Appropriations Committee that I am also a parent of a Deaf child. When our son was as young as three years of age, we took him to watch an NTD performance, "on the green" one summer day in Chester. At that time, NTD was headquartered in Chester, CT, and this was a part of NTD's free summer performance series. His eyes lit up watching the artistic flow of American Sign Language as stories were told. My son saw shapes and objects come to life while the actors described various scenes depicting animals, cars, ships, and other characters. This was when he first fell in love with NTD. As he grew older, he "assisted" in an audition with hearing children for a Christmas show that the company was going to perform. Now in college, my son recalls that day, and has expressed an interest in joining the company. As a parent, having this opportunity for my son told me of the lasting impression that NTD leaves for the thousands of young Deaf and Hard of Hearing aspiring actors who wish to work in the field of the performing arts and theatre.

With the support that Connecticut has provided, this opportunity has been made possible. Not only for Deaf and Hard of Hearing aspiring actors but for hearing actors as well. One of the unique features of NTD is to bridge two worlds together. No other National Theatre Company does this.

As a result of this, Connecticut can take pride in the fact that it has contributed to the success of many Deaf and Hard of Hearing Actors/Actresses. Actresses like Linda Bove, (Sesame Street) and the late Phyllis Frelich, (Children of a Lesser God) got their start with NTD and had gone on in becoming celebrities that we have seen on television today. NTD also paved the way for other actresses, like Marlee Matlin, and other young Deaf/Hard of Hearing actors who now star in the television drama series, "Switched At Birth". As in every parent's dream to have their child succeed, it is my hope that my son will have the same opportunity as the Deaf and Hard of Hearing actors before him.

Having the funding cut from this National treasure would have devastating effects to Connecticut's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community. Where would our current Deaf and Hard of Hearing students who are in high school or college go to pursue this profession vocationally? Where would they be able to obtain gainful employment in this field?

NTD's mission statement states that NTD changes lives through the arts. This also means changing the lives of Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals by employing them, and empowering them to be productive members of society. We ask that you please reconsider cuts to Connecticut's National Treasure and icon.

Thank you,  
Gary Greco, NTD Board Member

