

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and Member of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Appropriations Committee about the American School for the Deaf (ASD) and my children's education. My name is Carey Mallach and I am the father of four (4) children, three (3) deaf and one hearing. My deaf children have been attending ASD since they were 3 years of age, in total for 12 years. Nikita is now 15, Dylan is 14 and Hayden is 9. I communicate regularly with other parents both deaf and hearing, of ASD students, from age 3 – 21, from across the state. I speak with confidence about my own views of the education my children are receiving and I feel I can provide some insight from other parents' perspectives as well.

My children, as required in his/her IEP, must have a linguistically accessible total communication approach in order to have access to the educational curriculum, which includes American Sign Language (ASL), state of the art amplification and other communication assistive technologies.

ASD provides not only an education during the school day but a more global experience. ASD provides numerous opportunities for its students to compete and interact with their hearing peers, including athletics, a Robotics Team, a 25-year French Exchange program, Youth Forums and Leadership programs, After School Language Enrichment Program, Pen Pals, collaboration with other public and private schools and a variety of other community interactive special events. ASD focuses on the whole child, our children's social and emotional needs.

I would like to share with you the effort that the school makes to involve and engage families across the state in the school and school activities. My three children are involved in different organizations, activities, and events. Both Nikita and Dylan are part-time mainstreamed in the West Hartford Public Schools. They are students at Conard High School in the morning and ASD students in the afternoon. They started at ASD in pre-K then in the fall of 2015 because of a solid foundation provide by ASD they could be mainstreamed. I am happy with what ASD is providing and resources they have to support my three children. The critical key is language! My children use American Sign Language (ASL). They must have both ASL and English. My youngest son, Hayden is still a full-time student at ASD and in the future, he too will be a part-time mainstreamed student. As his English language improves and as his identity as a deaf person develops, the he too will be ready. All thanks to ASD. ASD has many tools and resources for my children and other children throughout the state. I am very satisfied with ASD. However, without these resources, many deaf and hard of hearing (hh) children will suffer and their rights as a deaf/hh child denied. I am very happy to see ASD supporting for my children and other children for choosing Full-time, Part-time or Full-time public school after their success with ASD.

ASD employs a responsive caring staff that addresses my children's needs and keeps me and other parents informed about my child's special education. They keep me up to date on my child's progress and successes. To include, a recognition and respect for deaf culture – individual differences and diverse population.

I want to thank you for your time and your support of ASD and my children's education. The State of CT has a treasure here that needs your support. I, like other parents, want to see my child develop fully

and to become an independent tax-paying citizen in our state. Thank you for listening and for supporting ASD, which in turn, supports my children's education and future.