

Sheri Romblad  
637 Opening Hill Rd  
Madison, CT 06443

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Appropriations Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Governors FY 17 budget plan and why it is critical to maintain the current State funding for the American School for the Deaf (ASD). This funding has historically enhanced ASD's effective programming, serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing student population across CT and it is imperative the funding remain in order to continue that success.

My son Luke was born on April 10, 2003. He was absolutely perfect! At the age of 8, Luke was diagnosed with Bilateral Sensorineural Hearing Loss (SNHL). In the 5th grade mainstream environment with all the bells and whistles in place, Luke was still reading at a Kindergarten grade level and still struggling with his ABCs. Prior to 5th grade, his educational road was paved with isolation from his mainstream peers, behavioral problems, elopement, a janitors closet converted into a "safe room", medication to treat a misdiagnosis of ADHD, and a constellation of other labels such as OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), PDD (Persuasive Developmental Disorder), and ODD (Oppositional Defiant Disorder). Thus further burying his true diagnosis of hearing loss and dyslexia. After years of struggling with our local program, at the request of the parents, Luke was placed at ASD.

It is at ASD where my husband and I received the most education about our sons hearing loss and his unique learning style. It is at ASD that we met a community of staff and parents who support us, give us hope, guidance and a shoulder to lean on. It is at ASD, when most systems were going to just give up on Luke or pass him through, that he is now in a classroom, doing work independently and making strides in his reading. It is at ASD that Luke is working independently and earning grades that are authentically his own. It is at ASD where my son is now considered Bilingual. It is at ASD where my son is getting emotional support to rebuild the confidence that was destroyed in a mainstream environment. It is at ASD where Luke is learning about growing his strengths and building his assets. And it is because of ASD that Luke has a pep in his step and smile on his face because he is learning that he can!

According to Wikipedia, the American School for the Deaf is the oldest permanent schools for the deaf in the U.S. It was founded April 15, 1817., in Hartford, CT by Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, Dr. Mason Cogswell and Laurent Clerc. And became a State Supported school later that year.

Connecticut has rich history supporting ASDs strong foundation. Programs and resources offered at ASD are helping not only my son, but hundreds of other CT students across the state. If these cuts happen, not only do our children and their families suffer, but the foundation to our future will suffer too. Let's stay revolutionary and continue on with the maximum support to ASD and ensure educational, emotional and social success with their students and their families and continue strengthening that foundation.

As parents, we dreamed of our child's success at birth. When we learned that our child will have challenges, our dreams became lost and shattered. It took a program like ASD to help us as parents to just dream a little differently and realize he IS an always will be perfect!

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