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Appropriations Committee Public Hearing RE: Elementary and Secondary Education Agencies.  

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I am testifying today to discuss the importance of State funding for the American School for the Deaf. The State of CT has a long history of over 200 years supporting children and youth who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing through the ASD program by providing a meaningful education for these underserved children and youth to transition to adulthood as prosperous, effective community members and leaders.  

Transitioning to adulthood weighs heavy on parents. Even if your child fits the typical model this can be a very taxing effort on the child, as well as the parent to ensure adulthood success. It is even more taxing when your child has unique abilities. For our child the mainstream model was not going to have a meaningful outcome.  

Our road to transition was not off to a great start in our district. Our child was unable to read and write by 5th grade, sat in a isolated classroom and was so ashamed of himself, we spent countless nights listening to him cry himself to sleep hoping, just hoping that he would wake up in the morning and hear again. And when you attend PPT after PPT trying to get better outcomes and only met with remarks like; he is never going to read or write but we have technology, or he doesn’t have to learn drive because there will be google cars. These responses just encouraged us to put more pressure on our district to look to other programs that can provide a better path. Finally, together with our district, we researched and interviewed several programs and it was the ASD program that came out on top.  

Today we have a 9th grader and as we speak, he has flown down to Las Vegas to compete in a culinary competition, he is reading, he is writing, he is captain of the ASD Tech Tiger robotics team, he is writing essays and applying for scholarships, he is maintaining a high GPA, he is in a classroom with other peers, he is social, he is happy and most of all he has learned to love himself. Although his original foundation was built on sand, through the support of the ASD program we are rebuilding brick by brick on solid ground.  

Instead of taking away from a program that is working to support a very underserved population as it stands, you need to consider investing in a solid program that is working to support our future community members, regardless of their abilities, who have the right to live and work independently and effectively as everyone else can. We need your support to provide the ASD program the necessary funding to invest in learning opportunities that my child would not have been able to achieve otherwise.  

I would like to thank all the members of the Appropriations Committee for allowing me to testify today.  

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