

Testimony in support of:  
House Bill 6637: AN ACT CONCERNING STATE-WIDE MENTAL  
HEALTH SERVICES FOR DEAF, DEAF-BLIND AND HARD OF HEARING PERSONS

Submitted by:

Connecticut Academy of Audiology  
2 Pomperaug Office Park  
Suite 307  
Southbury, CT 06488

Dear Sen. Moore, Rep. Abercrombie and members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Thomas Hinchey. I am a clinical audiologist representing the Connecticut Academy of Audiology (CTAA) as the organization's VP of Governmental Affairs. The CTAA is a professional organization of individuals dedicated to providing expert hearing and balance healthcare to the public.

I am submitting testimony on behalf of the CTAA and its members and affiliates. The CTAA supports House Bill 6637 to increase the accessibility to appropriate mental health treatment services for persons who are deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing.

Research has identified that the prevalence of mental illness in the deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing communities is at least equal to, if not greater than that of the general population.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the needs for care and service provision to these members of our community are unique and not widely accessible. Individuals who are deaf, deaf-blind or hard of hearing may communicate in various modes of language. The use of a language modality that matches the individual person is essential for communication during the evaluation and treatment process.<sup>1</sup> Language and communication are the method of treatment for mental health issues. When practitioners evaluate and treat people who are deaf, deaf-blind or hard of hearing and they are not culturally competent, or do not have sufficient knowledge and experience in identifying the unique needs of the individual, it can lead to misdiagnosis and poor outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

There is a shortage of practitioners with the appropriate skills and training to support the needs of these communities; therefore, interpretation services are required in order to facilitate treatment access. Appropriate interpretation services consistent with individual needs is also in short supply. HB 6637 will help increase accessibility to the culturally and linguistically affirmative mental health services and accessible mental health services that these communities need and deserve. A state-wide mental health services program for deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing persons can also create a more accessible point of entry to affirmative mental health services and increase the availability and quality of accessible mental health services for those seeking care.

On behalf of our membership, I urge you to support HB 6637 so that Connecticut moves closer toward providing equal access to appropriate mental health services for persons who are deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing.

Thank you for your consideration.



Thomas Hinchey, Au.D., CCC-A  
Certified by the American Board of Audiology

1. Landsberger, Sarah A, Sajid, Ayesha, Schmelkin, Leah, Diaz, David R, & Weiler, Courtney. (2013). Assessment and treatment of deaf adults with psychiatric disorders: a review of the literature for practitioners. *Journal of Psychiatric Practice*, 19(2), 87–97.  
<https://doi.org/10.1097/01.pra.0000428555.48588.f9>

2. Anglemyer, E., & Crespi, C. (2018). Misinterpretation of Psychiatric Illness in Deaf Patients: Two Case Reports. *Case reports in psychiatry*, 2018, 3285153. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2018/3285153>