

Written Testimony in Support of

HB 2757

Kathryn Eckert-Mason

Thank you for giving thought and consideration to supporting HB 2757 and leveling the playing field for Deaf students whose primary language is American Sign Language. I would like to stress that this is not a Disability Accommodation issue, but rather an Equal Access issue in the context of this bill. Current standardized testing that does not take into account a student's first language is unfair and puts the student with English as a second language at an unfair disadvantage. It is my understanding that Statewide Assessments are often presented to other students in their native language (Spanish and other verbally spoken languages)... Though not presented in ASL for those that are Deaf and claim ASL as their first language.

The impact of such inequity is that currently the majority of Deaf high school students for whom ASL is their first language are now graduating with Modified Diplomas. The impact of a having a Modified rather than a Standard Diploma, is the inability to access financial aid for most post secondary education training programs. Without access to financial aid, these students then must settle for entry level hands on employment which is very difficult to support themselves and a family on. It dooms them to entry level wages over time and poverty. Many of these otherwise bright young person's then end up instead on the rolls of Social Security / SSI without the pride of employment and the independence that comes from supporting oneself with ones' own wages. They run the risk of never becoming taxpaying productive citizens of Oregon.

I encourage you to please consider supporting HB 2757 and all that it stands for.

Thank you!

