

From: Dee Asuncion [impact24_7@hotmail.com]
Sent: Friday, March 19, 2010 12:15 PM
To: EDH Testimony
Subject: for children w/disabilities/communication,sign language&speech/DOE, resolution # SCR195

Importance: High

To: Hearing Committee
From: Mr./Mrs. Asuncion

As parents of a special needs child who currently utilizes and relies on sign language as his main modem of communication, we **SUPPORT THE RESOLUTION SCR195: Children with Disabilities; Sign Language; Total Communication.**

Under section 302A-436 Hawaii Revised Statutes, the DOE has a departmental duty to provide exceptional children, which includes students with disabilities, with special facilities and services for education, therapy, and training to anable them to live normal competitive lives.

It is imperative that the DOE establish specific requirements for the individuals who work with children requiring speech therapy, sign language, or other means of communication, to ensure that these individuals are equipped to facilitate proper learning. These requirements should include, but is not limited to, professional knowledge of and experience in working with special needs children, an understanding of the toal communication program (sign language, oral communication, and visual cues), and receive ongoing training throughout the school year. (A two day training prior to starting work is grossly insufficient).

We appreciate the findings and recommendations from the DOE outlined in the "Educational Implications of the Special Needs of Preschool Age Children with Developmental Disabilities: Report to the 24th Legislature, 2007". However, their existing procedures limit the provision of sign language interpretation services to children who are deaf or hard or hearing, and despite their own findings that these services be extended to children who are not deaf or hard of hearing as part of a total communication program, there is a shortage of these professionals.

Please support RESOLUTION SCR195. Our keiki deserves a fair chance at receiving a proper education with the proper supports in place. Those individuals working with special needs children should absolutely be qualified.

Thank you,
Mr./Mrs. Asuncion

March 19, 2010

To: SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION & HOUSING
Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chairperson
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chairperson

Hearing: SCR195 Children with Disabilities; Sign Language; Total Communication
March 19, 2010, 2:45 PM
Testimony in SUPPORT

Submitted by: Linda Elento, parent of children in public, charter and private schools, and board member of the Hawaii Down Syndrome Congress

I ask your committee to pass this resolution so that our keiki are no longer denied the opportunity to receive instruction and express themselves with the simultaneous use of speech and sign language, a.k.a., simultaneous communication, for their own safety, health and EDUCATION.

This resolution recognizes the need to (1) urge the Department of Education to establish requirements for individuals to teach and work with students with disabilities who hear and need simultaneous communication, as opposed to sign language interpreters who have a different responsibility, primarily to students who are deaf or hard of hearing; and (2) urge the DOE to establish a Simultaneous Communication policy and adding SC to the DOE's list of abbreviations, that acknowledges children with speech difficulties who hear may be considered for simultaneous communication training during the development of an Individualized Education Program. Without these requirements, some children's communication needs are not being met.

The Hawaii Administrative Rules and Hawaii Revised Statutes continue to fail to define simultaneous communication for children with disabilities who hear. Hawaii statute's definition for "speech pathologist" does not require sign language training. The Board of Education's policies only address this communication need for children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

There is a clear lack of guidelines and protocol in order for a student to be determined to benefit from simultaneous communication and for that need to be specified in an Individualized Education Plan. The education system must accept the research and results for the use of simultaneous communication for hearing students with disabilities, such as Down syndrome or other genetic condition, cognitive disability, autism, or other developmental disability which may limit or the ability to speak clearly, be understood, or to understand others. Children with Down syndrome typically have the strength of learning through simultaneous communication because speech delay is behind cognitive development and imitation skills are a strength.

The Department of Health's early intervention program understands and provides simultaneous communication instruction to children and their families. The DOE must continue these services that are critical to the children's developmental and communication needs, language training, access to the general curriculum, and for inclusion.

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Research this testimony is based upon includes the following research articles:

Buckley S.J. Speech, language and communication for individuals with Down syndrome — An overview. Down Syndrome Issues and Information. (2000). Retrieved March 19, 2010 from <http://www.down-syndrome.org/information/language/overview/> and <http://www.down-syndrome.org/information/language/overview/?page=5>

Carbone, Vincent J.; Lewis, Lisa; Sweeney-Kerwin, Emily J.; Dixon, Julie; Louden, Rose; Quinn, Susan. (2006, September 22). A comparison of two approaches for teaching VB functions: total communication vs. vocal-alone. The Free Library. (2006). Retrieved March 19, 2010 from [http://www.thefreelibrary.com/A comparison of two approaches for teaching VB functions: total...-a0170112923](http://www.thefreelibrary.com/A+comparison+of+two+approaches+for+teaching+VB+functions:+total...-a0170112923)

Edelson, Ph.D., Stephen M. Signed Speech or Simultaneous Communication. Autism Research Institute. Retrieved March 19, 2010 from <http://www.autism.com/families/therapy/sign.htm>

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of SCR195.

Linda Elento