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NCDHH Supports Proposed Rule 51 Changes Which Will Lead to Improved Educational Opportunities for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) is in favor of the proposed Rule 51 rule change that will increase the minimum standards of the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) for new interpreters hired in Nebraska Public Schools.

Proposed Rule 51 change will ensure Nebraska Public Schools can provide appropriate education for students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

NCDHH is in agreement with Boys Town National Research Hospital in Omaha, Neb. that one of the biggest factors impacting the educational outcomes of students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing is the interpreter. A competent and proficient interpreter is required to provide communication access in the classroom. When the educational interpreter lacks such skills, students cannot access the full content of the classroom.

Proposed Rule 51 change reflects a unified, diverse stakeholder consensus agreement

Stakeholders including Department of Education representatives, public school representatives, advocates, interpreters, and nationally recognized deaf education experts. This recommendation is also a continuation of the work done by the LB 287 workgroup that was created by Senator Haar. One of the recommendations by the LB 287 workgroup was to raise the EIPA minimum standards from 3.5 to 4.0.

Proposed Rule 51 change reflects a pragmatic, common sense approach to raise the minimum interpreter standards in Nebraska Schools

The proposed rule reflects a balanced approach of focusing on new hires and providing flexibility for school districts to address a potential challenges with the existing interpreter workforce; also with the understanding that **full** access is needed for academic success of the deaf and hard of hearing students in the classroom.

The companion Technical Assistance Guide will provide a road map for success for the implementation of this rule

The Technical Assistance Guide (TAG) will address any of the possible implementation concerns that school districts will face.

Proposed Rule 51 change is consistent with the Nebraska Board of Education Values and Beliefs

Implementation of the proposed Rule 51 change will enhance the educational and employment outcomes of students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Ensuring communication access is provided is consistent with the values instilled in “Every Student, Every Day”.

Parents, Advocates, Nationally recognized Deaf Education Experts, and others all support the need to raise the EIPA standards in Nebraska Public Schools.

“As the NeAD Education Advocate for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in Nebraska, I am in support of the proposed Rule 51 changes for educational interpreters and, in particular, raising the acceptable EIPA score from 3.5 to 4.0. Our Deaf and Hard of Hearing children should not be subjected to lesser quality of education than their hearing peers.” –*Dr. Peter Seiler, Education Advocate, Nebraska Association of the Deaf*

“On behalf of all the Deaf and Hard of Hearing children, I am pleased to see the increased qualification for educational interpreters who use EIPA as their qualification for classroom interpreting. The Nebraska Association of the Deaf has its mission to advocate for quality of life in Nebraska. That includes to making sure our children who are either deaf or hard of hearing deserve equal access to educational resources and receive the same high quality of education that children who can hear receive.” –*Jonathan Scherling, President, Nebraska Association of the Deaf*

“As Mental Health Specialist for the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and longtime advocate for people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, I offer this statement of support in raising the EIPA Standards to 4.0. Rather the need for interpreter services is for educational settings or the community at large, the quality of interpreting is essential to all who receive the means of communication.” –*Peggy Williams, Mental Health Specialist, Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing*

“As states strive to provide free and appropriate education to deaf and hard of hearing students, the proposed changes recognize that access to classroom content is highly dependent on the skills of the educational interpreters. As related service providers, qualified sign language interpreters serve a critical role in supporting the linguistic, academic and social objectives of K-12 education. Increasing the professional development requirements and the competency levels of educational interpreters to an EIPA level 4.0, demonstrates that Nebraska, like other states, supports the education of all students, not just those who can hear.” –*Barbara Woodhead, Sign Language Interpreter, Interpreter Trainer/Mentor*

Other quotes in support can be found attached.

Enclosure: LB 287 report

NCDHH February 23 Press Release

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