

Hello Chairman Ruby and Members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Donna Sorensen and I have the pleasure of serving as the Superintendent of the North Dakota School for the Deaf/Resource Center (NDSD/RC). I would ask this committee to give this bill a Do Pass recommendation.

NDSD/RC's vision, mission, and purpose is to serve and educate any individual with a hearing difference. Our Adult Hearing Outreach Program also serves to educate those who work with those who have hearing differences.

Deaf adults struggle to access governmental services due to communication barriers, gaps in the English language, limited access to sign language interpreters, and access to information about agencies purposes and services. I believe this study would provide specific ideas, or at least a potential path forward, about the gaps and allow the committee and government agencies to improve access for Deaf adults.

This study would also identify gaps for older adults who have a hearing loss and are proficient in English.

Finally, this study would give governmental agencies information to improve their outreach, their access, and their services for citizens of North Dakota who have hearing differences.

NDSD/RC stands ready to support this process in any way we can.