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Heath and Human Services Legislation Members pertaining LD 2255

Dear Heath and Human Services Legislation Members pertaining LD 225:

On the behalf of LD 225, I support the reestablishment of LD 2255 on following recommendations to ensure a balance of “in it” and “outside of it” perspectives are honored as it is a moral obligation for any task force appointed by the State to represent the people of Maine. In this case, Deaf Mainers. I trust that the narratives of others testifying will already cover aspects I am in solidarity with. I want to jump to focusing on how this Task Force will be reestablished with full transparency as a Deaf Native of Maine (to minimize confusion- I define for the purpose of this letter native in the definition of born and raised although I am of Abenaki descendent of Penobscot).

Let us start with a Deaf Interpreter appointed on the taskforce by ensuring one position is inclusive of their specialty. In the case where no DIs are available then possible avenues are to seek a Coda Interpreter native to ASL or third, a medical specialized hearing interpreter with a minimum of 10-years experience *and* is currently active in medical settings. I cannot stress how important that someone who is facing the current dilemmas with modern technology and is practicing various solutions due to carrying circumstances with linguistically diverse minority group is selected.

I further recommend that this new task force invites Meli Stamp, a Deaf Native of Maine, who recently began working for the state of Maine several weeks ago as a part of her scope of work to ensure streamlined efforts between her position as the Community Resource Coordinator and this task force. Her position is very unique and I am not sure if this state level position has been made aware to all involved.

Also, it is important to denote my personal opinion that the Task Force *must* include Deaf members who are native to Maine. Born and raised in this State. To ensure that a balance between those who moved here in their adult lives from other places in the United States and those who grew into their adult lives in Maine is honored and mutually respected. The previous task force only had *one* Deaf person native to Maine, Terry Morrell. This is problematic. I recommend at least 50% of the Task Force includes Deaf Native Mainers.

I also have an opinion that while we have DeafBlind people living in the state, we must ensure a position is filled by a DB person thus Emily Blachly's service has been very valuable and I wish for this status to remain. In the case she cannot for whatever reason, please make all efforts to ensure she is replaced with another DB individual. Additionally, while we have a very white population it is important to recruit BIPOC/POC people. Sitara Shike's position has been very valuable and it is important that in the case she cannot continue, we continue to recruit Deaf BIPOC. In the same thread of thought- I believe someone from the Deaf New American population is on this Task Force. We have approximately 35 DNAs with more on the way to moving here within the year. Their experience moving to Maine from around the world is crucial to include- especially as patients trying to access Maine Health care.

Point blank- health care affects everyone, thus they need to be invited, even paid, to join this Task Force. It would be moral injustice to continue with the previous Task Force as is. Often, those without insurance or other demographics are often patients far more frequently than those with benefits from full-time jobs, including those who did not grow up in Maine's history of treatment towards Deaf Mainers, and those that have bilingual privileges. And let there be a caveat that each position does not act as the sole representative but are liaisons to the diverse voices within their position.

In summary the new task force needs to have the following addressed:

- 50% of the task force is of Deaf Maine Native
- The D/HH/DB Community Resource Coordinator is invited as a part of their scope of work
- At least 1 position for DB
- At least 1 position for POC
- At least 1 position for DI, if unavailable then the following, Coda, or hearing interpreter with 10-years of interpreting in medical settings and is currently active
- At least 1 position for DNA

Sincerely,

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