



Northern Virginia Resource Center
for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Persons

3951 Pender Drive, Suite 130,
Fairfax, VA 22030

January 26, 2022

Honorable Delegates and Senators
Virginia General Assembly

Dear Legislators,

Our organization's mission is to empower deaf and hard of hearing individuals and their families through education, advocacy and community involvement. I am writing to you today to express our support for the passage of the Lead K bills (HB 649 and SB 256).

The bills address the importance of language access and assessment of progress on language acquisition for deaf and hard of hearing children so that they are well-prepared for kindergarten and beyond.

Intervention services with parental input and support allow informed decisions on the use of speech only, sign only, Cued Speech, or a combination of communication methods to best meet the needs of the child. Regular assessments help ensure that progress is being made and valuable time is not lost.

Some repercussions of early language deprivation that occur later in life are that the child may never be fluent in any language, spoken, written or signed. Early language deficits often result in lower academic attainment, most specifically in poor reading comprehension skills. The child may be socially and emotionally isolated. And sadly, a child with limited language skills is less able to communicate being abused to someone who might be able to help and is more vulnerable to exploitation.

As a retired educator of deaf and hard of hearing students, and someone whose own progressive hearing loss began in childhood, I can attest to the negative impact early language deprivation has had on the lives of many. Yet, for those who have language access, accommodations and monitoring from an early age, the path to success at school, work, and socially is made much more possible.

I hope you will support this bill.

Sincerely,

Eileen McCartin, Ph.D.
Executive Director