

**February 21, 2020**

**HB794 SUPPORT**

Chairwoman Kaiser, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your time. My name is Dr. Michelle Morales. I am an educator and one of the cowriters for HB794. I am asking you to think about the children, think about the Deaf and hard of hearing students. DHH students are a vulnerable group of people. The student cannot speak or advocate for themselves. It is up to all of us, caring adults like the state of Maryland, school administrators, and special education teams to make sure that the DHH students have access to education through educational interpreters who met the minimum qualification to do the job. The qualification expectation of educational interpreters should be no different than the state of Maryland has of classroom teachers, special educators, and school administrators. (1 minute, 12 second).

Communication access makes a world of different to the DHH student's ability to access academic learning. When the Deaf and hard of hearing students received educational interpreter service that are substandard, they are being deprived of equitable access to education. When the Deaf and hard of hearing students are deprived of education due to inferior educational interpreters then the problems compound every year. Deprivation of education is disabling. Eventually with years of substandard education due to poor interpreting service, it will become a public health issue.

Again, I am asking you to think about the Deaf and hard of hearing students' needs for communication access to education.

I am asking for a favorable report on HB 794. Thank you.

Dr. Michelle 'Mickey' Morales