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Education, Energy and Environment  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

As the principals of the Frederick and Columbia Family Education and Early Childhood Departments at the Maryland School for the Deaf, we are writing to give support to Senate Bill 502, establishing the Language Acquisition Tracking Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children. From an early childhood deaf education perspective, this legislation represents a critical step toward ensuring that deaf and hard of hearing infants and young children in Maryland have timely, measurable, and equitable access to language during the most sensitive period of early brain development.

Research in early childhood development consistently demonstrates that the first five years of life are foundational for language, cognitive growth, literacy, and social-emotional development. For deaf and hard of hearing children, early and consistent access to language must be intentional, systematic, and continuously monitored. Without clear benchmarks and coordinated oversight, language delays may go unidentified until children enter preschool or kindergarten, at which point remediation becomes more difficult and costly.

SB 502 addresses this gap by establishing a structured, statewide framework to monitor and support language acquisition from the earliest years. Specifically, this bill will:

1. Ensure ongoing, developmentally appropriate tracking of expressive and receptive language skills, allowing families and providers to identify and address language delays as early as possible.
2. Create coordinated leadership through a designated State Coordinator to promote consistent implementation, data-informed decision-making, and alignment across early intervention and educational systems.
3. Promote equitable access to language acquisition monitoring tools and resources for families throughout Maryland, regardless of geographic location or communication modality.

A systematic tracking program empowers families with clear information, supports professionals and families in making evidence-based decisions, and helps ensure that no child enters school without an age-appropriate language foundation.

By adopting SB 502, Maryland affirms its commitment to early identification, early intervention, and educational equity. The bill reflects best practices in early childhood deaf education and strengthens accountability for ensuring that deaf and hard of hearing children develop the language skills necessary for long-term academic success and lifelong participation. We respectfully urge the Committee to vote in favor of Senate Bill 502.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy G. Lindley".

Amy G. Lindley, M.A. Ed., Frederick Campus Principal  
Family Education and Early Childhood Department

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patricia Muldowney".

Patricia Muldowney, M.A., Columbia Campus Principal  
Family Education and Early Childhood Department