

Modernize Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division statutes

Date: March 13, 2024

To: Senate Human Services
Sen. John Hoffman, Chair
Sen. Omar Fateh, Vice Chair

From: Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing

Please support modernizing DHHSD statutes – SF4399

Our mission here at the Commission closely aligns with that of the Department of Human Services' Deaf and Hard of Hearing Division, except that we focus on system change while they provide direct support with individual advocacy and oversee grants serving this population. We serve the same stakeholders and often refer people to DHHSD when they need support with individual advocacy. Because of this, we call them our "sister agency."

We fully support the changes requested by our sister agency in SF4399 to better align their statutes with the invaluable services they provide to improve the quality of life for deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing Minnesotans.

Some wording changes may seem subtle to those not within our community, but they are meaningful and affirming of the empowering cultural and linguistic identities our community has built over many decades. For example, they have long served deafblind members of our community, and the updated wording affirms that this population has its own distinct identity and needs worthy of recognition. This recognition in turn will set a powerful example for other agencies to follow in serving the deafblind community.

Overall, these seemingly small changes send a powerful message of solidarity and invite increased trust from our mutual stakeholders. We are pleased that our sister agency is taking those steps, and we invite you to support them by adopting their provisions in SF4399.

Signed,



Alicia Lane, Government Relations Director