

Report to Education subcommittee on November 2023 meeting with the Nevada Department of Education Office of Inclusive Education.

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Education Subcommittee, NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
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On November 9 2023, Eric Wilcox, Catherine Nielsen and Obioma Officer met with Julie Bowers and Christi Hines-Coats, the Director and Assistant Director, respectively, of the Office of Inclusive Education in the Nevada Department of Education. The goal of the meeting was to share with them the input that the commission received from the community about the state of education of deaf and hard of hearing children in Nevada and how we might work together in the coming months to improve educational outcomes and services provided to deaf and hard of hearing children.

Concerns expressed to the commission span a range of concerns including a lack of adequate access due to a lack of interpreters or poor quality of interpreters, lack of knowledgeable teachers of the deaf, and hiring practices that discriminate against deaf applicants for staff positions. All of these and other complaints paint the picture of a system that fails to provide deaf and hard of hearing students with adequate access to the classroom content, instruction from their teachers, access to opportunities in all areas of school activities, and social interactions with their peers.

The Office of Inclusive Education leadership listened to these concerns and indicated that they had heard many of the same concerns. They also noted that they had heard from districts expressing to them their difficulties delivering services and finding adequate and appropriate staff for educating deaf and hard of hearing children.

A proposal was made to assemble a task force to review these issues, possibly following the model of the special SB203 committee that met in 2021 and 2022 as a subcommittee of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), with broad representation from parents, deaf adults and educational professionals. It was also suggested that a goal be set to develop an action plan for the state, which could be a goal of the suggested task force. It was noted that other states have deaf education advisory groups and we could seek to leverage models and expertise from other states.

Other items discussed included an offer from the Office of Inclusive Education to participate in outreach to families about their rights as a response to a perception that many parents are unaware of their rights. Also, that they would be willing to assist the commission in finding candidates to fill out open seats on the commission and subcommittees related to education as needed.