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Helping Alaskans with Differing Abilities Experience Hope Since 1968

March 23, 2023

Representative Jamie Allard
State Capitol Building, Room 415
Juneau, AK 99801

Representative Allard,

The Deaf Navigator program and Rural Deaf Student Support program at Hope Community Resources offer supports and services to Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind individuals of all ages. We know that it is of the utmost importance that these individuals have barrier free access to language acquisition, education, peer socialization, and Deaf role models. We are in support of HB 111 – An Act Relating to Public School Students Who are Deaf or Have a Hearing impairment.

Early assessment of the student's communication skills, including the child's aptitude for acquiring American Sign Language, is critical. The Individual Education Plan (IEP) should include a communication plan that identifies the student's primary language and includes instruction and access to services in their primary language. The IEP should address opportunities for the student to communicate freely with peers and to develop socially.

Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind children have unique challenges in life. As it has been shown time after time, these children thrive in an environment with Deaf role models, Deaf professionals and especially Deaf peers. For this reason, we feel it is imperative that there are programs and residential services provided by the school district.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of HB 111. If you have any questions or concerns, we would be more than happy to discuss these with you.

Sincerely,

Sharon Miranda
Coordinator of Deaf Supports
Hope Community Resources

Michael Merritt
Deaf Navigator
Hope Community Resources

Judy Lange
Admin Asst – Deaf Supports
Hope Community Resources