



"The world has watched the deaf community come of age. Together we've overcome our own reluctance to stand up for our own rights."

Dr. I. King Jordan, President
Gallaudet University

www.iadeaf.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Thursday, June 23, 2016

President
Corey Axelrod
president@iadeaf.org

Office of the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission
Attn: John Miller
528 South Fifth Street, Suite 209
Springfield, Illinois 62701

Vice President
Kevin Ryan
vicepresident@iadeaf.org

Dear Director Miller:

Secretary
Shelley Williams
secretary@iadeaf.org

On behalf of the Illinois Association of the Deaf (IAD), I write this letter to you from a place of great concern. We received the June 2016 "Communication Matters" Newsletter from the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission (IDHHC) on June 22, 2016. Shortly after receipt, we received letters of concern from our members regarding the "Collaboration on the search for ISD (Illinois School for the Deaf) Superintendent" blurb in the newsletter.

Treasurer
Lisa Roth
treasurer@iadeaf.org

In this blurb, the IDHHC announced a partnership initiative with the Department of Human Services and the Governor's Office and the establishment of a steering committee to advise IDHHC on ensuring a comprehensive vision is set in place. While the IAD was pleased to see progress be made with DHS' decision to collaborate with IDHHC, we are extremely disappointed with the IDHHC for excluding the IAD, Illinois School for the Deaf Alumni Association (ISDAA) and Jacksonville Community Center for the Deaf (JCCD) from the steering committee.

Membership Secretary
Susan Dramin-Weiss
membership@iadeaf.org

The IAD, in partnership with ISDAA and JCCD, continuously lobbied the Department of Human Services and Governor's Office to be inclusive of the Deaf community in the search for the next ISD superintendent. Further, the three organizations, along with many community members, have also been extremely vocal in expressing concern with the issues that have transpired at ISD.

As director of the IDHHC, you've seen these concerns addressed at several Illinois School for the Deaf Advisory Council (ISDAC) meetings, as well as at IAD Board Meetings and the IAD Community Roundtable Meeting on April 9th in which you represented the IDHHC.

Simply put, the IDHHC has been well aware of the various issues at ISD, but have not taken a position to put a halt to issues of audism and oppression on ISD's campus. Instead, representatives from the IDHHC, including yourself, has expressed neutrality and IDHHC's stance on representing all deaf and hard of hearing community stakeholders.

The exclusion of IAD, ISDAA and JCCD from the steering committee is anything but that.

We all want the best for the children. As we look to secure the next superintendent of ISD, it is time for the IDHHC to collaborate with community-based organizations (e.g., IAD, ISDAA and JCCD) and the community members you serve.

As a former IAD President, you had the first-hand experience of addressing and dealing with the issues the Deaf community continually faces, including the quality of education for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children. As you may already know, the benefit of having access to IAD representation is an opportunity for the IDHHC to hear thoughts and concerns from more than four hundred (400) IAD members and eight local and statewide organizations affiliated with the IAD. This is precisely why I, as an IAD President, strongly urge you to consider granting IAD a seat on the committee so IAD can offer an appropriate representation of the statewide Deaf community on the committee.

The IAD also strongly posit the IDHHC include representation from ISDAA and JCCD on the steering committee. The inclusion of representatives from all three organizations on the committee will help ensure the IDHHC establishes a comprehensive, unbiased vision for its efforts in securing qualified applicants for the ISD Superintendent position. At the same time, this inclusion will demonstrate to the community at large that members of the community are valued constituents, an imperative part in repairing IDHHC's image and strengthening IDHHC's relationships with the greater community.

Sincerely,

Corey Axelrod

Corey Axelrod
President
Illinois Association of the Deaf

cc: Kevin Ryan, Vice President, Illinois Association of the Deaf
Shelley Williams, Secretary, Illinois Association of the Deaf
Lisa Roth, Treasurer, Illinois Association of the Deaf
Susan Dramin-Weiss, Membership Secretary, Illinois Association of the Deaf