

February 24, 2016

Office of the Governor
Attn: Dr. Beth Purvis, Secretary of Education
100 W. Randolph
JRTC Ste 16-100
Chicago, IL 60601-3220

Office of the Rehab Director
Attn: Kris Smith, DRS Deputy Director
100 S. Grand Ave E
FL 002. Springfield IL 62762

Dear Dr. Beth Purvis and Ms. Kris Smith:

I am writing to you to express concerns about the steps taken by the Governor's Office and Department of Human Services (DHS) in securing a new superintendent for Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD).

I join the Illinois Association of the Deaf (IAD) and Illinois School for the Deaf Alumni Association (ISDAA) in expressing the Deaf community's lack of representation on the search and selection committee continues to be concerning. The benefits of including Deaf individuals on the committee are two-fold, 1) the final recommendation made to the Governor will take into consideration the Deaf community's diverse perspectives on language and cultural nuances not intuitive to other individuals involved in the process; and 2) demonstrating members of the Deaf community are valued constituents will appease and attract qualified applicants who have every intention of strengthening ISD's relationship with the Deaf community. The Governor's Office and DHS should include representatives of the Deaf community on the search and selection committee.

The Governor's Office and DHS must also commit to remedying the current situation at ISD. Deaf community leaders have expressed grave concerns about the current situation at ISD in which the marginalization of American Sign Language (ASL) and audism has dominated the campus. Despite assurances by the Governor's Office, DHS and ISD that policy and procedural changes would be made, the situation at ISD has not improved. This has rendered the ISD superintendent position as undesirable, and served as a deterrent to qualified candidates applying for the position.

Further compounding the issue is that ISD is competing with a significant amount of other schools for the deaf looking to secure a new superintendent. Along these lines, the Governor's Office and DHS must also creatively showcase ISD to generate interest from prospective candidates. The current recruitment process lacks appeal, a stark contrast to the recruiting processes of other schools, including Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind and Washington School for the Deaf, as they created creative, inspiring videos to showcase their respective schools.

Taking corrective actions is an imperative part of repairing ISD's image and communicates a high level of commitment to the applicants and shows respect for the search process as a whole. Subsequently, I implore the Governor's Office and DHS to collaborate with the Deaf community to ensure a brighter tomorrow for the ISD community, one free of language marginalization, audism and oppression.

Sincerely,