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STATE OF ILLINOIS

DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING COMMISSION

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Madam Chairperson and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony with regard to SB 752. While the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission (IDHHC) believes the intent of this bill is to ensure adequate services to the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind community, it is misdirected to require these additional mandates for the operation of IDHHC.

IDHHC is located in Springfield, IL, and has a current appropriated headcount of 7 including the Director, Assistant Director, Personnel Manager, Legal Counsel, Program Coordinator, Office Assistant (vacant) and Interpreter Coordinator (vacant). It is overseen by 11 Commissioners who are appointed by the Governor. IDHHC's typical operational budget is approximately \$650,000 from the General Revenue Fund. Additionally, IDHHC administers the Interpreter for the Deaf Licensure Act of 2007, which has an appropriation authority from Special Fund 449 of \$200,000. IDHHC's current mandates focus on informational services to the Deaf Community and program review and recommendation.

IDHHC is concerned about the following areas of SB 752:

- The delineation of hearing loss demographics for Commission appointments

IDHHC agrees it is important for the Commissioners to represent the various portions of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind community. However, this will unnecessarily narrow the pool of applicants eligible for appointments. This will cause delays and possible vacancies.

- Additional mandate to provide individual advocacy

IDHHC mandates focus on education and program review. With IDHHC's current budget appropriations and headcount, we will not be able to meet this additional mandate. IDHHC has provided these services on an extremely limited basis and only when there are not services available in the consumer's local region. IDHHC relies heavily on referring these very types of cases to the Centers for Independent Living (CIL); there are 22 Centers for Independent Living throughout the state. CILs offer a number of core services including but not limited to advocacy, counseling, independent living skills training, and information & referral to people with disabilities across the state of Illinois. CILs are already situated to provide individual advocacy services-IDHHC is not.

This proposed mandate not only duplicates services already being provided at a local level but would require additional staffing at IDHHC to be able to fulfill this requirement statewide on a daily basis. IDHHC anticipates this would require anywhere from 3-5 additional staff along with associated costs for equipment, phone lines, emails, etc.

For the above reasons, IDHHC opposes SB752.

Sincerely,

John Miller
IDHHC Director