



"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

September 13, 2017

Dear Chairperson Dennis O'Brien and Ms. Leslie Strain:

The Illinois Association of the Deaf (IAD) Board of Directors met on September 10, 2017 and voted to send this letter to inquire the status of and plans for the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission (IDHHC) to improve outreach and provision of services. The IAD Board of Directors continues to see IDHHC's lack of transparency and communication, as well as IDHHC's continuous subpar service delivery and failure to satisfy mandates established in law. The IAD Board of Directors remains significantly concerned about the adverse impact this has had on the Deaf and hard of hearing community and entities that rely on the IDHHC.

Although IDHHC Chair Dennis O'Brien shared with commissioners and attendees during the February 9, 2017 Commissioner's meeting at the Swoboda Deaf Center in Chicago that there would be an increase in communication with the greater community, we've seen a significant decrease in the use of the IDHHC ListServ. Additionally, the IDHHC website is outdated. The homepage features Director Miller's video about the repeal of the interpreter licensure act and information about the May 11th commissioner's meeting. Director Miller's video was distributed on January 26, 2017, and SB325 already passed the House and Senate last May. We also understand Laura Thomas resigned from the Commission, yet her name was listed as a Commissioner for an extended period of time after her resignation. Outdated information is commonplace throughout the IDHHC website.

Furthermore, the lack of outreach is a concerning issue. During the February 9th Commissioner meeting, Chair O'Brien also emphasized IDHHC would be responsive to concerns about IDHHC. There have been multiple opportunities for IDHHC to engage the IAD and greater Deaf community, yet the IDHHC has made minimal efforts whatsoever to engage with the IAD. To this end, while Assistant Director Janet Lambert and Tonia Bogener represented the IDHHC at the IAD and IRID Conference, the two attended the Illinois Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (IRID) Business meeting and did not attend the IAD general meeting.

Without clear and public information regarding the status and activities of the IDHHC, the impacted constituencies are searching for answers. Consequently, it is imperative that the IDHHC take action to share information to reassure the affected parties.

Specifically, we ask for the following:

- **Sustainability in operations and personnel** We request the IDHHC provide via regular and widely public communications the activities of the IDHHC and personnel changes impacting the agency's operations, including hires and extended absences from the office (e.g., medical leaves).
- **Public and transparent information about the IDHHC Director** We request the IDHHC provide the current status of IDHHC Director Miller and whether he is officially on administrative leave. If Director Miller is on

Illinois Association of the Deaf
P.O. Box 2161, Palatine, IL 60078
224.800.1795 • info@iadeaf.org
www.iadeaf.org

administrative leave, we request additional information including the reason for the administrative leave, the length of leave and the division of responsibilities in Director Miller's absence.

- **Public and transparent information about the ISD "Listening Tour"** We request the IDHHC provide via regular and widely public communications the status of the ISD "Listening Tour" the IDHHC Director was tasked by the Governor's Office to lead.
- **IDHHC's Involvement with SR528** We request the IDHHC provide via regular and widely public communications the status of SR528 and the IDHHC's intentions to work with the Governor's Office to accomplish the objectives set forth in SR528.
- **Commissioner Vacancies** We request the status of Commissioner vacancies and an explanation of the efforts IDHHC and the Governor's Office has taken to fill these vacancies with qualified, unbiased individuals.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and request a response by September 27, 2017.

Respectfully,

Illinois Association of the Deaf Board of Directors

Corey Axelrod

Corey Axelrod
President

Elke Weinbrenner

Elke Weinbrenner
Membership Secretary

Donald Moore

Donald Moore
Fox Valley Chapter Representative

Kevin Ryan

Kevin Ryan
Vice President

Edison Lopez Jr

Edison Lopez, Jr.
Member at Large

Joe Vieira

Joe Vieira
Jacksonville Chapter Representative

Leon Devriendt

Leon Devriendt
Secretary

Patty Weston

Patty Weston
Chicago Chapter Representative

Tom Bruhn

Tom Bruhn
McLakes Chapter Representative

cc: Honorable Illinois State Senator Julie Morrison
Honorable Illinois State Representative Michelle Mussman