



"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

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January 22, 2017

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Chicago, Illinois 60608

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Dear Ms. Teitelbaum:

**Treasurer**

Lisa Roth  
treasurer@iadeaf.org

On behalf of the Illinois Association of the Deaf (IAD), I am writing to express our concerns regarding your decision to close the Deaf Health Program at Mount Sinai. The Deaf Health Program has been a valuable community resource and the closing of the program will have a disparaging impact on the well being of Deaf individuals who use your services. This speaks volumes to the success of the program, one that made it possible for your hospital to be nationally recognized for providing quality health care and education for Deaf individuals and patients.

**Membership Secretary**

Susan Dramin-Weiss  
membership@iadeaf.org

The IAD is gravely concerned about the lasting implications your decision will have on the Deaf community:

- Contracting out interpreting services and other services to third party entities mean your health care system may not be as readily capable to serve Deaf individuals in a timely manner and be best equipped to meet the varying communication needs of the Deaf community.
- If Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) is being considered as a substitute for in-person interpreting, it is recommended your administration do further research on VRI and the effectiveness of said solution. The IAD aligns itself with the position of the NAD in which in-person interpreting services are the optimal solution in facilitating accessible communication between a hearing and Deaf individual (for more, visit <https://www.nad.org/about-us/position-statements/position-statement-on-vri-services-in-hospitals/>).
- The absence of staff members who are competent and readily available to assist Deaf individuals will now leave patients, those who have previously entrusted your staff, vulnerable to potential abuse or neglect and without resources.
- The lack of staff members who are cognizant of the needs of a further marginalized population, Deaf immigrants who do not possess conversational fluency in American Sign Language (ASL) and English. This leaves the high number of Deaf immigrants in Chicago susceptible to lack of care and support the Deaf health Program has provided them.
- Who will provide ongoing training to your staff and medical professionals on how to best serve Deaf patients and remaining in compliance with relevant disability laws?

The lack of an official announcement to the greater Deaf community about the closure of the Deaf Health Program signifies the possibility your administration has underestimated the value of the Deaf Health Program. While stressing the urgency to proceed in communicating with the Deaf community of this closure, the IAD strongly suggests you offer an open dialogue on how your organization can continue to best serve the Deaf community. This shall be done through a town hall meeting with the Deaf community, one where your administration can hear the concerns about the closure of the Deaf Health Program at Mt. Sinai.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Corey Axelrod*

Corey Axelrod  
President  
Illinois Association of the Deaf