

CAD PRESS RELEASE

Senate Bill 210 to End California's Epidemic of Language Deprived
Deaf Children
For Immediate Release

LEAD-K CAMPAIGN

We are proud to announce that California Association of the Deaf (CAD) has been a key partner in the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) Campaign to push for more language accountability during the first five years of a Deaf and Hard of Hearing child's life. This campaign includes a legislative push to create generations of Kindergarten-Ready Deaf and Hard of Hearing children with ASL and English. As stated by Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor at Harvard Medical School, "The single greatest risk faced by Deaf and Hard of Hearing children is inadequate exposure to an usable first language."

Because of misguided and misinformed principles and policy, Deaf and Hard of Hearing children frequently arrive at Kindergarten without adequate language skills to undertake academic challenges. There is rarely mention of language development that is essential for successful social, emotional, and education development. Language involves more than just communication. With language, individuals develop cognition and all associated neurological functions. Without language skills, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing children will have academic and life struggles for the rest of their lives. In California alone, we have a statewide epidemic of language-deprived Deaf and Hard of Hearing children.

SENATE BILL 210

It is time to end this tragic statewide epidemic with accountability. SB 210, authored by Senator Galgiani, enforces language benchmarks in ASL and English during each Deaf and Hard of Hearing child's first five years to ensure they are on track to be academically and socially ready for Kindergarten. We invited the California Coalition of Option Schools (Weingarten Children's Center, Children's Choice for Hearing and Talking, and the John Tracy Clinic) and Center for Early Intervention on Deafness, to review our bill. We all support this bill because we want children to be academically and socially ready for Kindergarten at the age of five.

ABOUT LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Deprivation of and delayed access to language are two potential causes of reading and academic failures. Deaf and Hard of Hearing children are perfectly capable of achieving Kindergarten-Readiness through American Sign Language and English. We all agree there must

be language benchmarks and systematic accountability for outcomes during the first five years of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing child's life. Deaf and Hard of Hearing children must be tested for language development when they are first identified, as infants, and every three months afterwards, from ages 0 to 5. Waiting until early elementary grades will cause irrevocable developmental harm to the child. Deaf and Hard of Hearing children are capable of succeeding in school, but cannot do so with stunted language development. Additionally, parents should be informed about the benefits of language growth and be provided with opportunities and resources for their children.

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF SUPPORTS THE BILL
"California Association of the Deaf (CAD) aims to end California's epidemic of language deprived Deaf children ill prepared for Kindergarten. This bill will enforce language acquisition accountability during each Deaf child's first five years of life, so they can have lifetime of academic and social success. Language acquisition is a basic human right to ensure that all Deaf babies and toddlers have full access to acquiring a language and experience the same milestones as their hearing peers. It is a very basic human right taken for granted by those with full access to language," said Julie Rems-Smario, CAD President.

CALIFORNIA COALITION OF OPTION SCHOOLS SUPPORTS THE BILL
"California Coalition of Option Schools and the Center for Early Intervention on Deafness are pleased to be working collaboratively with the California Association of the Deaf in support of SB 210. Many children who are deaf or hard of hearing arrive at Kindergarten with severe language delays. This legislation under the leadership of Senator Galgiani will require the educational team for deaf and hard of hearing children to focus on the essential language skills require to participate in school, allowing them to be successful in school and in life," said Gaston Kent, President & CEO of John Tracy Clinic.