

Chantell Johnson

Parent, Metro Deaf School

Testimony in support of SF2502

Senate Education Finance Hearing

Tuesday, March 25, 2025, 8:30 am

Chair: Sen. Mary Kunesh

To Whom it may concern,

Our experience with Metro Deaf School's Birth to 3 program has been truly magical and life-changing. Our 2-year-old son was formally diagnosed with having moderate/severe hearing loss at 2 months old. We were new to the Deaf and DHH community and weren't sure where to start. We were thankful for the early intervention services that were provided to help our family navigate a new world of support for a child with differing needs than our two other children.

During the first year and a half of his life and our learning about him, we noticed that Bryson was progressing at a slower rate than we were told through traditional medical model support. Even with monthly visits from an Early Childhood Deaf and Hard of Hearing educator, access to regular visits to an audiologist, and the regular use of hearing aids, Bryson still was not progressing as we had hoped. In addition, we learned that due to the blockage of fluids, his language and communication skills began to regress further.

In early 2024, we began to explore what it would mean to access ASL services, ASL led education, and also get tubes in his ears to help build his language and development skills. In the spring of 2024, our family had the great pleasure of touring the Metro Deaf School's Birth to 3 program, and my family's lives were instantly changed forever. We fell in love with the environment, the programming being offered, and the inclusiveness of the environment to help build support for our son's needs.

Bryson joined the MDS Student family in the fall of 2024, and we have watched our son's development transform. To his amazing teacher, Carla Larson, her support educational assistants and all the other supportive staff at MDS has transformed our son's educational experience. As a family who is embedded in Early childhood education and Mental Health, we know the value of early intervention and support.

MDS has gone above and beyond for our family and continues to do this amazing work in the Deaf, DHH, and Deaf plus community. Our family will forever be grateful to the Birth-Three program for not only educating and impacting the life of our son but also for our family in the most meaningful and well-connected ways. We have seen how our son has come to life in both learning ASL and Spoken English, and we owe it all to MDS. I hope our story helps paint the

picture of those who truly believe in early intervention and how it transforms our lives and the lives of our children and communities to have access to high-quality education in environments designed for them to thrive and excel.

With tremendous love and gratitude,

Chantell and Rofael Johnson
Parents to Bryson Johnson

Chantell Johnson
Ramsey, MN
larkinsc14@gmail.com