

Welcoming Remarks
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children's Bill Of Rights Work Group
September 20, 2007

Good morning, it is my pleasure to welcome all of you who made the time to be here! I want you to know that I am gratified that you all accepted the invitation to come together this morning and do what is a very important piece of work. You may not realize the magnitude of this opportunity for us to do this. Now, to fully appreciate that I will give you a thumbnail history of how a national movement now involves us in the state of Maine that will ultimately benefit the children who are Deaf and hard of hearing.

If I recall correctly, back in 1986, a Presidential Commission was formed up during President Ronald Regan's Administration and leading educators in the field of Deaf Education were appointed to form up the Commission on Education of the Deaf and the thrust of their work was to achieve equality for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children. They found that much work needed to be done and gave their report to The U. S. Department of Education with 52 recommendations. Ten years later in 1998 after the COED report a coalition of national organizations came together again to develop a new blueprint and that effort culminated in the formation of the National Deaf Education Project (NDEP). In 2000, NDEP put out a monograph written by Larry Siegel entitled The Educational and Communication Needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children: A Statement of Principle Regarding Fundamental Systemic Educational Changes that advocated for a strong language and communication based model for educating Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children. Well, this along with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children's Bill of Rights movement that started in California spread slowly throughout the country. Colorado has a Bill of Rights, so do the states of Montana, Rhode Island to name a few.

Encouraged by the success other states had in addressing the needs of this population group to ensure a solid language and communication based delivery system in educating these children. I decided to take the lead in advocating for such a bill during the 123rd legislative session and the legislature responded with a resolve bill and has asked us as a

working group to address nine areas of discussion before reporting back to the legislature so that they can make an informed decision.

The power is in our hands to make a difference. Let's make every use of this opportunity; I know we can do it!

Thanks