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CHILDREN • GRANTS • DEAF & HARD OF HEARING

1 February 2019

Dr. Roger N. Casey, President
McDaniel College
2 College Hill
Westminster, MD 21157

Dear Dr. Casey,

The education and success of Deaf and hard of hearing children are reliant on their schoolteachers, especially those with proper training and American Sign Language (ASL) expertise. Over the years, many children have grown to be prosperous, bicultural, and bilingual because of the Masters in Deaf Education program at McDaniel College, which has been widely considered as **one of the top five Deaf Education programs in the nation**.

Currently, there is a critical shortage of teachers for the Deaf nationally and Maryland recognizes this dire shortage. A study conducted by Dolman (2010) indicates a reduction in Deaf Education training programs across the country over the span of 20 years. The number continues to decline to this day, which is alarming.

Because only 25% of parents use sign language to communicate with their Deaf and hard of hearing children, they face limitations at home that include incidental learning and literacy. While the children's brains are developing, they are in the most critical period for language acquisition. Without accessible communication, they are at a higher risk of losing their opportunity to gain cognition, language, academic, and social skills as they age. Their main source of accessible education is at school, where they have the opportunity to grow up to be contributing members of society. The tremendous impact Deaf Education teachers have on children is life-changing. McDaniel College plays an immense role in training educators and securing a successful future for our Deaf and hard of hearing children.

The current number of McDaniel College Deaf Education program applicants is double than average, with 20 individuals interested, but the applications are frozen due to the recommendation for the closure of this program. These 20 candidates are capable of being qualified educators, mentors, and role models for thousands of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children they will each encounter in their careers. In the years to come, hundreds of thousands more children are at stake of receiving the education they need from teachers that are culturally and linguistically competent if the program were to close. This ripple effect is infinite.

Because the Deaf Education program at McDaniel College is a tremendous source of Deaf educators across the country, the future of Deaf and hard of hearing children and their families is in your hands. We ask you to please protect the human right of ASL accessible education for Deaf and hard of hearing children. Therefore, we strongly recommend the rejection of the termination of this prominent program.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kelby Brick, Esq., CDI
Director, Maryland Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Cc: Dr. Mark Rust
Program Coordinator, Deaf Education