

DHHCAN Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 7, 2018
Capitol Visitor Center

Special Session with Claire Viall & Taylor Huhn from the offices of Rep. Mark Takano & Rep. Kevin Yoder

Attendees

- Zainab Alkebsi, NAD
 - Chelsea Morris, NAD Policy Intern
- Tayler Mayer, TDI
 - Claude Stout, TDI
- David Bahar, CSD
- Neal Tucker, RID
- Barbara Raimondo, CEASD
- Al Sonnenstrahl, DSA
- Michele Mulligan, Cerebral Palsy and Deaf Organization

Guests

- Bob Loftur-Thun, NVRC
 - Tom Dowling, NVRC
- Dr. Christian Vogler, Gallaudet University Technology Access Program
- Bill Mulligan

Updates on Congressional Deaf Caucus - Claire Viall and Taylor Huhn

- The Congressional Deaf Caucus was founded in 2013 to provide better access to representatives in Capitol Hill. Since then, they have had better collaboration with the deaf community and started hosting deaf interns (they have hosted many since they started). They've been working a lot on employment and language acquisition. They are definitely open to more ideas on what they can do for the deaf community.
- Their to-do list is to get funding to meet the goal of \$132 million for Gallaudet/NTID. This is an increase of \$5 million compared to last fall and \$8-9 million compared to last year.
- They believe that Helen Keller National Center can do a lot more if they grow and expand their footprint across US.
- They also added that they've been working on telecommunication relay funds.

Q&A:

Taylor (TDI) questioned if Melania Trump's visit at Gallaudet University helped their visibility for the people at Capitol Hill.

- Both responded with "I don't know" but Claire mentioned that any high-profile people visiting Gallaudet will always be a good publicity.

A member wanted to clarify if the budget was not only for Gallaudet but for NTID too.

- Yes, both.
- Kansas School for the Deaf is under Rep. Yoder's office so they will always want to work on providing services for deaf/hard of hearing population.

Zainab brought up the VR funding issue in regard to states refusing to provide funding support to deaf/hard of hearing students who wanted to attend out of state at Gallaudet/NTID.

- Zainab will email both offices with more information since this was not on the agenda.

Specific Topics from DHHCAN Policy Document:

Overview/History:

Claude, as former Chair during the development of the document to the Trump White House, summarized as follows:

- He mentioned that we are not asking for more funding or services; we are just asking to open dialogue with the new Administration on cradle-to-grave topics that have impact on the lives of Americans who are deaf, deafblind, or are deaf and have an additional disability like mobility. In this document, we submitted seventy-five recommendations for seven life activity areas.
- He has tried to send letters to the White House (Trump Administration) to get our foot in the door with their new administration and to ask for a dialogue. We hope to have Claire's, Taylor's and Megan's help to make new connections with the new Administration.

H.R. 620

Zainab led this portion of the discussion. H.R. 620 passed the House and now the goal is to prevent a similar bill happening in the Senate. Both staffers were already aware of that concern and agree that such legislation is a danger to the ADA overall. Both said they doubt the bill will pass in the Senate.

- Claire emphasized the importance of educating Congresspeople about how this bill will weaken the ADA and that not all bills that sound good are actually good. Zainab added that yes, the title of the bill was quite misleading and there were many misconceptions in regard to the rationales behind the bill.

- Claude added: what a lot of people don't know is in order to pass the ADA, we had to make several sacrifices like us not having private right of action on certain such as relay services. The same goes for us in TV captioning. We made the concession when we made captioning access as a part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. So, when we have these issues, we cannot just sue the company or agency. Because of those sacrifices, we respectfully ask that we not see further erosion of our rights under the ADA.

Captioning

Taylor asked for updates on closed captioning access and Zainab provided a summary of NAD's working relationship with Amazon, Netflix, Hulu, Apple, and many more, leading to increased caption access to online content.

- Sonny mentioned his frustration of opening videos online only to find out there isn't any captions available.

Employment

Claude explained that currently about 48% of deaf and hard of hearing people are employed compared to 72% of hearing people who are employed.

- He suggested the idea of talking with businesses/companies to see what their plans are in terms of hiring deaf/hard of hearing people in the next 5, 10, 15 or 30 years, and whether their plans are being met from instruction and curriculum plans in education at the K-12, colleges and universities, and community colleges levels. This would apply to both students who are hearing, and do not have a disability. And those who have a disability, including those who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind or are deaf and have an additional disability like mobility.
- He believes that exploring these issues starting with some hearings by the Congressional Deaf Caucus would be a good first step.
- Claude also mentioned that we need to start asking tough questions to both the Departments of Education and Labor to get them to address these issues at a national level. Get them to coordinate their efforts at an interagency level as well.
- Sonny commented about his experience working in a vocational rehabilitation office; he said that they are trying to decentralize resources but what the deaf community needs is centralized resources.

David Bahar provided a summary of the Small Business Association (SBA) 8A incentive. They are trying to encourage SBA to recognize people with disabilities as its own category. Megan Perez in Rep. McMorris-Rodgers' office indicates they are willing to

support the bill but haven't done much and it seems the timing has not been good for them. He is also waiting to hear from the chair of SBA to see if this issue is on his list.

Education - Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act

Barbara Raimondo explained that she had a briefing for staff to get support for the bill a while ago so she suggested that we should have another one soon. She also said we need more people to really understand what this bill is for. She was asked about ESEA but she says it is too broad; it wouldn't recognize deaf, blind & deafblind people so we need the Cogswell-Macy Act for that.

Net Neutrality

Zainab and Christian led this portion of the discussion. This issue was briefly touched upon because both staffers were familiar with this particular topic. The major impact on our community is in regard to video access, such as video relay services, which deaf/hard of hearing people use on a daily basis to be able to function in this world. Without net neutrality protections, such access could be compromised, which would be especially concerning in the emergency services context.

Zainab asked the staffers about congressional oversight and their plans regarding the Congressional Review Act (CRA) to overturn the FCC's decision on net neutrality.

Claire responded that it's a possibility but not very likely to move forward.

- A member threw in the idea of collecting stories on people's experiences and how this issue affects them.

Wrap-up

Michele shared her experiences struggling to find a job even though she has a college degree. She says she worked hard for that college degree and holds it proudly but struggles to find a job so that does not make sense to her. She emphasized that deaf individuals who also have other disabilities are more disadvantaged in the job market so they need extra support/services with the job search.

Zainab will touch base with both staffers with more information on specific topics as requested by them for follow-up purposes with their respective offices.

Next Meeting Date

- Wednesday, April 4, 2018

The meeting ended at 1:30 pm.

Submitted by

Chelsea Morris, NAD Policy Intern