

Dear Sir:

I am writing as one of the co-founders of National Black Deaf Advocates, BDA Cleveland Chapter 2, and the wider Deaf community. We are proposing that March 13th- April 15th be designated Deaf History Month and are asking for your support at tomorrow's legislative committee meeting at 10 am.

As you many know, Deaf persons posses a distinct culture and are strong proponents of American Sign Language (ASL), a distinct, bona fide foreign language. Our language cannot be extricated from our culture, a culture rich with folklore, poetry, drama, humor and its own values.

ASL is ranked among the top 3 languages used nationally, with several universities and more and more high schools offering courses for foreign language credit. Numerous students are studying to become interpreters, Deaf educators, and professionals in related fields.

Akin to Black History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month, Deaf History Month would allow us to further showcase, promote and preserve our culture while educating and inviting our Hearing counterparts to appreciate, respect and enjoy our culture and community.

Please include my comments as you prepare to testify at tomorrow's legislative committee meeting at 10 am. I am sorry I am unable to attend because I will be teaching ASL at 2 universities tomorrow. I trust the 4 Deaf representatives who will attend will be able to garner your support.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Cordially,

Charles V. Williams,
Co-founder, NBDA
CBDA Cleveland Chapter 2 Liaison