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| Pete RickettsGovernor **Jeremy Fitzpatrick,**  *Chairperson*  Commission Members  Frances Beaurivage  Lincoln  Jonathan Scherling  Omaha  Candice Arteaga  Greenwood  Dr. Stacie Ray          Lincoln  Norman Weverka  Brainard  Robert Feit LincolnSandra ShawSewardDiane SchuttFairburyJohn C. Wyvill *Executive Director* | **Deaf & Hard of Hearing Organizations Stress Importance of Communication Access Amid COVID-19 Pandemic**  Information regarding the COVID-19 disease (Coronavirus) has been shared on a national and global scale. Declared as a pandemic, the information announced is of extreme importance and could be life-saving for people. Such information includes preventative measures, updates with our health care system, and what to do for those who may have been infected.  There have been recent instances of live broadcasts, press conferences, and announcements across the country made by public officials and which have not been fully accessible for deaf and hard of hearing communities. This has included not providing live captioning as well as a live, qualified and licensed sign language interpreter, or the camera angle does not include the interpreter in the entire frame.  The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) has made public comments to combat this issue nationally. NCDHH has also worked at the local and state level with public officials and news media to provide information and education regarding best practices on making broadcasts and announcements fully accessible.  It is a part of NCDHH’s goals and vision to collaborate and work with stakeholders and other organizations to unite in our advocacy efforts. The Commission has reached out to multiple organizations in support of our efforts:  **NCDHH Board - Jeremy Fitzpatrick, Chairperson**  “Having correct information about the Coronavirus may be a matter of life and death for vulnerable populations.   We urge government officials to include sign-language interpreters in any public briefings on the Coronavirus so that all citizens can have access to public announcements about how to proceed in this time of crisis.”  **Lincoln Association of the Deaf – Roy Scherling**  “It is very important for every Deaf/Hard of Hearing to have the equal access of information as the hearing person, able to understand in a variety of settings, such as the performing arts, schools, hospitals, court rooms, law offices and more.  Not only that, the importance of interpreters is to have fluency in two languages (ASL and English).”  **National Association of the Deaf, Region II - Linsay Darnall Jr.**  “As a NAD board member representing thirteen Midwestern states, I have been notified of various live press conferences that have been happening on coronavirus has been conducted without an ASL interpreter present or they were situated off camera. The NAD has released a statement requiring that the ASL interpreter must be visible on live television. It is the responsibility of the state to provide equal communication access to ensure the health and safety of all Deaf and Hard of Hearing citizens regarding any emergencies including the current pandemic.”  **Interpreter Review Board - Peggy Williams, Chairperson**  "During this critical time in our Country with the Coronavirus pandemic, it is imperative that effective communication accessibility be provided to Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans pertaining to any information that is reported about this virus. For information or questions about offering accessible communication, please contact the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at 402-471-3593. Thank you for your attention to this matter."  **Omaha Association of the Deaf - Candice Arteaga, President**  “With the coronavirus pandemic happening, I have been monitoring of what going on and ensure that we are updating Deaf community to make sure they are aware. The best tip that I can give you is to remain calm and stay home if you are sick or not. Stay safe.”  **Nebraska Association of the Deaf - Mark Andersen, President**  “The deaf and hard of hearing individuals are a part of the Omaha community. It is important that we get the same accessibility as everyone else. This will enable us to work together with the general public of Omaha, during this COVID-19 crisis.”  **Nebraska Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf - Tina Work, President**  "Access to communication is a vital part of our everyday lives. Effective, clear and current communication in our present circumstances is crucial.  We as a community need to be vigilant to make sure that all peoples, cultures and languages in our state have equivalent up-to-date access to the life changing and lifesaving information being provided by various sources and entities during this current crisis.  The Nebraska Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (neRID) would like to encourage us all to seek out every avenue possible to ensure that the members of the Deaf community in Nebraska, whose primary mode of communication is American Sign Language (ASL), are being provided equal opportunity to all live broadcasts by using whatever means possible to provide a live and in person sign language interpreter in full view at all times at all press conferences and TV newscasts or entity announcements.”  **Hearing Loss Association of America – Omaha Chapter, Arva Herman**  "Because of the many news briefings about the coronavirus, it is critical that all news briefings be captioned.  Some have been providing sign language interpreters as well.    We encourage other media outlets to do the same. Additionally, always look toward the camera even when pointing out something in the background.  Many of us do speech reading.”  *Organizations, businesses, officials or media personnel who would like more information on how to effectively provide communication access, please contact NCDHH at 402-471-3593.*  #  Please click the link below to view.  [The NCDHH newsletter, The Communicator, is now available online!](https://ncdhh.nebraska.gov/sites/ncdhh.nebraska.gov/files/2018%20Spring.pdf)  C:\Users\ben.sparks\Desktop\2013 Winter Newsletter\December 2013, Print version.jpg  [http://www.tweezerman.com/uploaded_files/tinymce/images/facebook-logo.jpg](https://www.facebook.com/nebraskacommissionforthedeafandhardofhearing/)  To unsubscribe from the E-Communicator, reply to this email with “Unsubscribe from E-Communicator” in the subject line of the message. |
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