

From the Office of Congressman Matt Cartwright, PA-08



For Immediate Release
October 23, 2019

Contact: Kaylee Robinson
202-225-5546

Cartwright, McKinley Introduce Bill to Improve Educational Services for Students with Hearing and Vision Disabilities

Washington, DC – Today, Representatives Matt Cartwright (PA-o8) and David B. McKinley (WV-o1) re-introduced bipartisan, bicameral legislation to improve educational services for students who are blind, visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. Senators Ed Markey (MA) and Shelley Moore Capito (WV) introduced companion legislation in the Senate earlier this afternoon.

The *Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act*, named after the first deaf student formally educated in the United States and the teacher of Helen Keller, respectively, would strengthen existing requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1975 (IDEA) to provide the best possible education to students who are blind, visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. This bill would improve state reporting and evaluating measures for students with hearing and vision disabilities and guarantee that educational resources are appropriately targeted.

“This bill takes decisive steps to ensure that students with hearing and/or vision disabilities have the resources they need to thrive in school,” **said Congressman Matt Cartwright**. “Only by meeting these students’ unique learning needs can we hope to finally close the achievement gap that exists between them and their hearing and sighted peers.”

“Americans have made great strides since 1975 toward improving the lives of children dealing with hearing and sight disabilities but there is still more work to be done,” **Rep. McKinley said**. “We need to ensure the nearly-half a million kids with these disabilities have the same opportunity as other children to learn and develop skills. This is a common sense step to ensure we are helping these children.”

Specifically, the *Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act* would amend the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1975 (IDEA) by:

- requiring states to identify and evaluate children who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind;

- expanding knowledge about the scope and quality of special education and related services provided to students who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind;
- encouraging states to conduct strategic planning that guarantees all students who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind receive the specialized instruction and services they need; and
- increasing the U.S. Department of Education's responsibilities to monitor and report on states' compliance with requirements relating to specialized instruction and services for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind.

The bill is supported by over 75 organizations including, the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD) and the National Association of the Deaf.

“School systems have been required to appropriately serve deaf and hard of hearing students since IDEA was passed, however, many gaps in services remain,” **said David Geeslin, the President of the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD).** “Deaf and hard of hearing students can achieve high levels when their language, communication, and educational needs are addressed. The Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act will help ensure that personnel and resources are available to support the success of these students.”

"In our country of opportunity for all, the Cogswell-Macy Act is a powerful bill that truly ensures opportunity and success for all children particularly those who are blind or visually impaired and those who are deaf or hard of hearing," **said Howard Rosenblum, Executive Director of the National Association of the Deaf.** “The National Association of the Deaf asks all legislators to join in a bipartisan show of support for all of these children.”

Other organizations endorsing this bill include: American Association of the DeafBlind, American Council of the Blind, American Foundation for the Blind, American Society for Deaf Children, Cerebral Palsy and Deaf Organization, Children's Center for Communication/Beverly School for the Deaf, Deaf Focus, DeafBlind Citizens in Action, National Association of the Deaf, National Coalition on Deafblindness, National DeafBlind Intervener Initiative, National Family Association for Deaf-Blind (NFADB), National Intervener Association, Pennsylvania Partnership for the Deafblind, Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TDI), and The Global Foundation for Peroxisomal Disorders.

The *Cogswell-Macy Act* is co-sponsored by: Rep. McKinley (WV-01), Rep. Fitzpatrick (PA-01), Rep. Norton (DC-At-Large), Rep. Pete King (NY-02), Rep. Lujan (NM-03), Rep. Moulton (MA-06), Rep. Moore (WI-04), Rep. Peters (CA-52), Rep. Schakowsky (IL-09), Rep. Schiff (CA-28), and Rep. Swalwell (CA-15).

###

Congressman Matt Cartwright is a member of House Democratic Leadership and the House Committee on Appropriations. He serves as Vice Chair of the Commerce-Justice-Science Subcommittee and is a member of the Financial Services & General Government and Military Construction-VA Appropriations Subcommittees. He also serves on the Committee on Natural Resources. Pennsylvania's 8th Congressional District includes Lackawanna, Wayne, and Pike Counties, and portions of Luzerne and Monroe Counties.