

## Response ID ANON-PYJC-FRH6-C

Submitted to Sign Language Bill - Call for Evidence  
Submitted on 2025-04-11 17:24:34

### Consent and introduction

What is your name?

Name:

[REDACTED]

What is your email address?

Email:

[REDACTED]

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

Please confirm you have read the Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee privacy notice by clicking the button below.

I have read the privacy notice

Do you consent to your submission being published on the Committee's website and included in the Committee's report?

Yes, publish but with my personal information and any content that could be used to identify me redacted.

### Clause 1

Do you feel Clause 1 goes far enough in formally recognising BSL and ISL as languages of Northern Ireland?

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

We must never allow ourselves to forget where we are. We live in the nation wholly committed to maintaining the division between those who build the castles and those who get to live in them. In such a nation whose very existence depends on exclusion, the formal recognition of a historically excluded minority is likely to be long overdue, so some responses may be cynical. So of course BSL and ISL are equal to each other, obviously. What I really want to know is, are these languages equal to English and to Irish? So does this mean Northern Ireland will be a country with four official languages (English, Irish, BSL and ISL) and one regional language (Ulster Scots)?

### Clause 2

Do you feel Clause 2 goes far enough in promoting the use of BSL and ISL and developing deaf culture?

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

"The Department for Communities must promote, to such extent (and in such manner) as the Department considers appropriate"

Such a slimy use of the word 'must' here, don't you think? Kind of contradicted by the fancy bit of wordage that follows, saying the Department gets to decide the 'extent' to which it 'must' do anything, if at all.

Are there any other approaches (apart from providing for the availability of classes) that could help to meet the objective of the greater use and understanding of BSL and ISL?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

For some, a campaign letting them know that they are living in an officially multilingual nation will motivate them to learn at least some of the other languages as a matter of national pride. If we want BSL and ISL as official languages, hearing and d/Deaf people will have to really imagine what true equality of access to communication looks like and implement it. Whatever that ultimately looks like, it'll involve greater use of, and public exposure to, BSL and ISL.

### Clause 3

Do you think the duty placed on prescribed organisations to make the information and services accessible to members of the deaf community is sufficient?

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

3(2)(b) This breaks my heart. You are essentially telling a historically-excluded community that their existence is at long last finally recognised but their inclusion depends on it not costing anything or inconveniencing anyone. I'm not okay with that, and I doubt you are either. This section should instead address what funds the Department for Communities will release to cover the cost of a deaf person unable to access a service due to issues of affordability or practicability to organisations. And I'm really hoping you foresaw that acknowledging the reality of two more official languages would have some budgetary implications.

### Clause 4

Do you support the approach taken by Clause 4?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

I support knowing whose voices are being represented. Though in the interest of transparency, I would prefer to also know the reasons why individual organisations are being added to or removed from the list.

### Clause 5

Do you support the approach to consultation required in Clause 5?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

This is operational policy, I don't see any problems here except I would want the Department to be very clear and open about how it arrives at an assumption that a particular person or group can act on behalf of the Deaf community.

### Clause 6

Do you support the approach taken in this clause?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

Yes, but in your training please remind people of the necessity to not presume other people's needs on their behalf.

Do you feel there is anything else this Clause should include?

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

### Clause 7

Do you support the provision for the Department for Communities to make regulations detailed in Clause 7?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

I'm starting to bristle at "a person acting on behalf of the deaf community" as if that's even possible or as if it's one monolithic thing. It seems like a strange way of thinking about groups of people.

Do you support the approach to consultation detailed in Clause 7?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

## Clause 8

Do you feel the level of consultation required in Clause 8 is sufficient?

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

Please lay out your criteria for determining the suitability of an individual or group to act on behalf of the community they belong to. I'd like to be able to see which traits you are looking for so I can alert you to any assumptions you might be making.

## Clause 9

Do you think evaluating the impact of the Bill in a report every five years is an appropriate length of time?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

I would defer to people with experience of evaluating the impacts of bills as to what's an appropriate length of time. I have no experience in these matters.

## Clause 10

Do you support the creation of a scheme for accrediting BSL and ISL teachers?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

By insisting on standards, you demonstrate that you are serious about this bill.

Do you support the creation of a scheme for accrediting BSL and ISL interpreters?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

By insisting on standards, you demonstrate that you are serious about this bill and about the needs of deaf people.

## Clause 11

Do you agree with the definition of the deaf community provided for in the Bill?

No

Please give details to support your answer. Please outline what people or groups you think should be included or excluded and why.

Text box for entering additional information:

People who aren't deaf but who communicate best in BSL or ISL should of course have access to the benefits of this Bill, as do members of the Deaf community. You can acknowledge this without presuming to have the authority to confer Deaf community membership on people when convenient. Again, let's remind ourselves that we're talking about a historically excluded minority finally achieving some long-overdue recognition of its existence in a nation built on division and exclusion. Let's not treat people's identity as something a government can presume to make alterations to, or use as a convenient fudge or a loophole "for the purposes of the Bill".

## Clause 12

Do you agree with the definition of BSL and ISL provided for in the Bill?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer. If you think there are any aspects missing, please outline what you think should be included.

Text box for entering additional information:

If we are aiming for absolute equality, where people experience the same level of access regardless of which official language they are speaking or signing, I might expect to see some mention of written forms of BSL/ISL.

## Clause 13

Do you agree with the definition of "everyday reliance" provided in the Bill?

No

Please give details to support your answer. If you think there are any aspects missing, please outline what you think should be included.

Text box for entering additional information:

I disagree with the introduction of "everyday reliance" into the discussion. A person who wishes to interact with services in any of the official languages of their country should be able to do so without having to justify themselves or be made to feel they wouldn't be such a drain on resources if they could just communicate better in spoken English. BSL and ISL are beautiful, established languages of these islands in their own right and not just something you communicate in because you have no choice.

## Any other comments

Is there anything which you expected the Bill to make provision for which has not been included in the Bill?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

Acknowledgement that, just like English and Irish arose from the mouths of generations of hearing people of these islands, BSL and ISL arose from the hands and faces of generations of Deaf people of these islands. Hence the need to officially recognise these languages as part of our linguistic heritage.

If you have any other comments in relation to the Bill please tell us here.

Text box to enter additional details: