

Reference number

██████████

What is your name?

██████████████████

What is your email address?

██

If you are providing a submission on behalf of an organisation, please state its name.

██████████████████

(Required) Please review the Committee privacy notice at this link. Please tick here to confirm you have read the notice.

Yes

(Required) Do you consent to your submission being published on the Committee's website and included in the Committee's report? (For signed responses, these will be transcribed into written English before publication)

██████████████████

Clause 1

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

I must express my disappointment to date with the lack of information available in sign language. While having this WhatsApp group is a welcome development, it highlights the urgent need for a meaningful Sign Language Act. Until now, I have been unable to engage with the process due to the absence of accessible communication in sign language.

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.

Teaching sign language to deaf children is crucial. However, based on my personal experience, attending youth camps, Deaf sports events, and Deaf clubs played a

pivotal role in shaping my identity as a Deaf person. These spaces allowed me to fully embrace my language, culture, and identity. Our young people must be afforded these same opportunities.

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/NO

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Deaf children need to see Deaf role models in various positions - teachers, sports coaches, youth leaders. The key to achieving this is ensuring that activities for Deaf children are Deaf-led.

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? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Requesting an interpreter must become common knowledge and standard practice. I've personally experienced situations in hospitals where staff refused to contact the office to book an interpreter. We need greater awareness: we are not being difficult - we are asserting a basic language right.

Clause 4

Do you support the approach taken by Clause 4? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

I would require significantly more information before I could support this. At present, the details are too vague and unclear.

Clause 5

Do you support the approach to consultation required in clause 5? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Deaf children must be educated in environments tailored to their specific needs - either with an interpreter or preferably a Deaf teacher. This is the only way to ensure effective education, as Deaf children learn in distinctly different ways.

Clause 6

Do you support the approach taken in this clause? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

I must answer "no" here. Broad and inclusive consultation is necessary. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I have never been consulted by the department on issues that uniquely affect me. I represent just one subgroup within the Deaf community. There are many others, each with different needs and all deserving to be heard - something that has been lacking thus far.

Do you feel there is anything else this Clause should include? YES/NO

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

A Deaf-led group would be far more appropriate for this responsibility. However, it is essential that this group be representative of the entire Deaf community, including all Deaf clubs and organisations.

Clause 7

Do you support the provision for the Department for Communities to make regulations detailed in clause 7? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

I must also answer "no" here. This issue is about much more than the example given. When I attended university, there was no understanding of my needs. More broadly, we must protect our community spaces, create opportunities to reconnect, and ensure our community is able to celebrate and pass on information and rights.

Do you support the approach to consultation detailed in clause 7? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Again, I say "no" because broad and inclusive consultation is essential. Everyone who wishes to participate must be welcomed and given the opportunity.

Clause 8

Do you feel the level of consultation required in clause 8 is sufficient? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

I reiterate my "no" response for the same reasons as above.

Clause 9

Do you think evaluating the impact of the Bill in a report every five years is an appropriate length of time? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

I believe the proposed timeline should be shortened to two years. Additionally, I want a clear understanding of what will be monitored. This presents a valuable opportunity to begin tracking educational outcomes, which would strengthen the case for Deaf education reform in Northern Ireland.

Clause 10

Do you support the creation of a scheme for accrediting BSL and ISL teachers? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

No, I strongly believe that the Deaf community must retain ownership of this process, not the Department for Communities (DFC). This point cannot be stressed enough.

Do you support the creation of a scheme for accrediting BSL and ISL interpreters? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Once again, no. Ownership must lie with the Deaf community, not DFC. This is of critical importance and must be clearly acknowledged.

Clause 11

Do you agree with the definition of the deaf community provided for in the Bill? YES/NO

No

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

I have no issues with the first three categories, Deaf, Deafblind, and CODAs, as they are integral parts of our community. However, I question the inclusion of the final category. If it refers to non-verbal individuals, or those who are neurodivergent or shy and use sign language, I wonder whether their inclusion may be better suited within

a disability or medical framework. I am concerned about the potential for misuse and would need more clarity and consideration on this point.

Clause 12

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

YES/NO

Yes

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

Yes I have no objections to what is outlined here.

Clause 13

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

YES/NO

Yes

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

Yes I agree with the proposals put forward.

Any other comments

Is there anything which you expected the Bill to make provision for which has not been included in the Bill? YES/NO

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

I believe the bill is lacking in several critical areas. From my perspective, it will have minimal impact on my daily life. There must be specific provisions outlining how sign language and Deaf culture will be actively promoted, particularly through Deaf arts and sports. These elements should be written into the bill now.

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

I would like to see how the bill will help our community thrive once more. A scoping exercise should be conducted to evaluate interpreter fulfilment rates in the public sector, projected demand, and how accommodations will be implemented in other key areas of life. For true protection and promotion of the language, greater Deaf involvement is essential in all stages of implementation and decision-making