February 25, 2020

To Whom it may concern:

Ohio Citizens for Deaf Culture (OCDC) was the first organization to lobby to the state of Ohio Legislature for Ohio Deaf History Month to be celebrated March 13 to April 15. This bill (SB27) was passed and signed into law by the former Ohio Governor, John Kasich, on December 6, 2017.

March 2019, United States Representative Joyce Beatty, from Ohio District 3rd, introduced HR 224 Resolution for a National Deaf History Month to be celebrated by all states March 13 to April 15.

Alice Hagemeyer, First Deaf Librarian, and Honorary member of the American Library Association (ALA) is one of the Visionary Leaders at Gallaudet University. She strongly believes that March 13 to April 15 should be Deaf History Month supporting the various events such as the Deaf President Now (DPN) when Gallaudet appointed the first Deaf president on March 13, 1988; Abraham Lincoln signed Charter Day authorizing Gallaudet University (College) to confer college degrees on April 8, 1864; and the first public school for the deaf founded in Hartford, Connecticut on April 15, 1817 now, known as the American School for the Deaf.

In 2006, the American Library Association (ALA) and the NAD announced that March 13 to April 15 is the National Deaf History Month, thanks to the efforts of Alice Hagemeyer.

Since 1997, the Friends of Libraries for Deaf Action (FOLDA), which was established by Alice Hagemeyer, in cooperation with both Deaf and Library communities has been promoting the public to observe March 13-April 15 as National Deaf History Month sending out a Press Release 2015 stating this.

In 2012, the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) urged everyone to recognize and celebrate March 13 to April 15 as National Deaf History Month.

The OCDC and other states support celebrating Deaf History Month March 13 to April 15. Recently, OCDC was informed that the current Deaf Culture and History Section (DCHS) by NAD are revisiting this resolution and are now proposing to make the full month of April officially Deaf History Month and notified other Deaf organizations and associations for their approval. We learned that NAD voted during the 2016 NAD Conference to change the dates of Deaf History Month to a full month in April to follow other Heritage Months which are full months. The DCHS feels March 13 to April 15 does not reflect the deaf community as a whole and is not inclusive of Deaf people of other race and nationality who were successful. Please remember the 1800’s was not
an inclusive era. However, OCDC does celebrate Deaf people of other race and nationality who have met various milestones, such as Lenora Culpher, who became deaf and blind at the age of six and was the first Black and Native American Deafblind student to graduate from the Ohio School for the Deaf in 1919; Andrew Foster, who was the first Deaf African American to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree from Gallaudet and established several schools for the Deaf in Africa training the teachers; Charles Williams who established the Black Deaf Advocacy organization in Ohio; and most recently, Christine Sun Kim, an Asian American, who signed America the Beautiful and The Star Spangled Banner before the recent Super Bowl game.

Attached is a list of months that the various heritages are celebrated. Please note the National Hispanic-Latino Heritage Month is celebrated September 15 to October 15. Please note one of the biggest event when Gallaudet University appointed the first Deaf president on March 13, 1988. The is the reason we want to celebrate Deaf History Month starting March 13th.

We are asking for your help to support March 13 to April 15 as National Deaf History Month and not the month of April by submitting letters or e-mails to the Deaf Culture and History Section at the National Association to voice your desire to continue to celebrate National Deaf History Month March 13 to April 15.

Please support and contact Nicholas Semanko, Legislative Director for U.S. Congresswoman Joyce Beatty, at Nicholas.semanko@mail.house.gov or 614.220.0003.

Thank you:

Dawn K Watts, OCDC President

cc: OCDC Board and Reps

Attached:
--Heritage Month Schedule