

March 2010

Dear Commissioner Gendron,

I wanted to take a moment to write to you in regards to State support of auditory oral education in Maine....

My son, Zachery, is six years old and has been successfully mainstreamed in our local school district since Pre-Kindergarten. If he had not had access to well-trained, certified therapists and educators who specialize in auditory oral education for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, this would not be his situation today. He was born with profound bilateral, sensorineural hearing loss, and he has been using cochlear implants to access spoken language and the sounds of the world around him since he was 14 months old.

Although cochlear implant technology is miraculous, it is not an instant solution to the issue of hearing loss. The most important part of habilitation comes after the implant surgeries -- the therapy and education that focuses not only on building expressive and receptive language to age-appropriate levels, but that which also guides the family through creating and living an auditory-focused lifestyle.... Like other children with special needs, children with hearing loss need to work with professionals who have the proper certification, training, and experience to best help them achieve their goals. *We found that only the personnel at Hear ME Now possessed this unique set of skills and expertise, and we have been working with them for the past five years with great passion and results!*

As a family, our goal has always been for Zachery to attend our local schools, to participate in community programs like little league and ski lessons, and to form ties with his neighborhood peers. This is best accomplished by equipping him with the skills needed to communicate and speak for himself. Zachery is doing well in his mainstream placement. He has many friends, is building age-appropriate literacy and math skills, and participates in youth league baseball and soccer programs. He is able to converse with his peers, coaches, teachers, extended family and members of the community because he has developed an age-appropriate level of language and listening that allows him to understand the speech of others and allows others to understand his spoken language with little to no problem. *Over time, he has required fewer and fewer support services and will become a truly independent citizen, which will result in a net savings to our local school district and to the taxpayers of Maine.*

Our family was fortunate to have access to qualified auditory oral services, and it has truly changed Zachery's life from one of isolation to one of inclusion. Should you wish to further discuss my family's experiences with hear ME now and auditory oral education, please feel free to contact me and request a meeting at your convenience. I would be happy to talk with you and to introduce you to Zachery so that you could see what a difference auditory oral education can truly make in a child's life.

Sincerely yours,

Lisa M. Glidden