

Colleagues,

You may be aware that the Italian National Association of the Deaf (known there as Ente Nazionale Sordi, or ENS) is spearheading efforts to have the native sign language of Italy, Lingua dei Segni Italiana (LIS) recognized as an official language. NTID, as the world's preeminent technological institute for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, recognizes and supports these efforts.

As we have affirmed in NTID's *Strategic Decisions 2020*, NTID is committed to recognizing, studying and using both English and American Sign Language (ASL) in our educational community. Respect for the language preferences of students and colleagues has long been a hallmark of our community — but this is not only about respect; it is about educational benefit. ASL, which we define broadly in *SD2020*, is a critical component of our educational philosophy, along with all other communication methods used at NTID.

In addition, as the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) has said, "the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD)... mandates that all countries will recognize their respective native sign language(s) as official languages deserving protection and promotion among the deaf and hard-of-hearing citizens of the country." Like NAD, the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) has expressed its support for the recognition of LIS as an official language. I am pleased that NAD and WFD have taken the lead in advocating for their constituents on this vital issue.

Many countries, and many states within our nation, have already moved in this direction, yielding many positive educational benefits for their deaf and hard-of-hearing citizens. Here in America, the growing recognition of American Sign Language (ASL) as an official language has also led to more and more hearing students taking ASL to satisfy foreign language requirements, thereby (as with all foreign language study) increasing mutual awareness of and interaction between diverse cultures. On our own campus, hundreds of students have enrolled in ASL classes as a means of fostering this interaction, with very positive educational results.

For all of the above reasons, NTID fully supports the UN Convention's declaration that all countries shall recognize and promote their native sign languages and urges formal recognition of LIS consistent with the recommendations of the WFD and NAD.

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