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<http://www.dbcusa.org>

May 29, 2011

President of the Chamber of Deputies

Subject: Recognition of the Italian Sign Language (LIS)

Dear President,

We, the Deaf Bilingual Coalition are appalled that in 2011, Italy would consider degrading the language of the Italian Deaf in a proposed bill by replacing the name of Lingua dei Segni Italiana (LIS), with the bizarre name of Language of Mime and Gesture (LMG). We urge you to drop the proposed new terminology (LMG) and use the respected name of the Deaf Italian language, which is Lingua dei Segni Italiana (LIS).

The Deaf Bilingual Coalition promotes the basic human right of all Deaf infants and young children to acquire a complete language and develop strong cognitive skills. All Deaf infants and children are best able to do so using natural Signed Languages of the Deaf people such as American Sign Language, LIS and LSQ (langue des signes quebecois), for example.

The main purpose of the Deaf Bilingual Coalition is to emphasize the importance of the social, cultural, and linguistic aspects of natural Signed Language in promoting healthy emotional and cognitive development in all Deaf infants and young children.

The secondary purpose is to make the general public aware of the prevalence of misconceptions and misinformation that perpetuates the devaluation of natural Signed Languages of Deaf people not only in North America, but also other parts of the world.

The DBC is alarmed by the creation of a possible bill that would devalue LIS, which is the bona fide language of the Italian Deaf community. This inappropriate

terminology of LMG reflects a serious lack of understanding or awareness on what constitutes a true language. Linguists would never endorse LMG, which does not have the linguistic features of a complete language. The fact is that LIS meets all the requisite features of a language. Therefore, LIS has been recognized and endorsed not only by Deaf communities but also by linguists.

The closest parallel that would help you understand our position is this hypothetical situation where the name of the spoken Italian language is changed to one that does not reflect the rich vibrancy of Italian. This new name would be the Language of Moans and Groans. The Italian people's reaction to this ridiculous new name would be understandably intense. There would be a great outcry, which is precisely what you are getting from the Italian and international Deaf communities.

This proposed bill is in contravention of two important clauses in the International Congress on Education of the Deaf Accord for the Future:

- Call upon all nations to include the sign languages of their Deaf citizens as legitimate languages of these Nations and to treat them as equal to those of the hearing majority.
- Call upon all Nations to facilitate, enhance and embrace their Deaf citizens in all governmental decision-making processes affecting all aspects of their lives.

LIS is an important language that Deaf Italians have endorsed and treasured for centuries. Please make it a priority to ensure that the terminology of LMG will not be used in any piece of legislation.

Sincerely yours,



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