

## The Controversy on AB2072

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### Description:

Community advocate, Megan Malzkuhn, describes her experience with the State of California Assembly Bill 2072, which proposes a law for the state to distribute brochures for parents of newly identified deaf babies.

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### Translation:

Special interest groups with a lack of ethics are currently making their way through the Capitol in Sacramento to lobby for the bill AB 2072. On one hand, in the legal prose, AB 2072 is about parents' choice for their Deaf newborns. On the other hand, analyzing the jargon, it is about corporations' eagerness to privatize human beings.

The Deaf and bilingual community have done everything by the book to save the future of Deaf newborns. They went to Sacramento to lobby politicians to oppose AB 2072. They showed up at the hearings and floor votes. They made video testimonials. They wrote articles. They called the Assemblymen and Senators to oppose the bill. They tried to meet with Assemblyman Tony Mendoza, the author of AB 2072, several times even though Mendoza repeatedly ignored them. They exhausted their options. They are educators of the Deaf, parents of Deaf children, siblings of Deaf, mental health counselors, social workers in vocational rehabilitation field, grassroots community members, college professors, business owners, non-profit organizers, interpreters, and many more in the spectrum of the Deaf community. They knew the bill was not balanced and catered to special interest groups. The only thing they did and do not have: money.

An implanted Deaf child can produce a profit of \$60,000 and up. They undergo intensive speech and audiological training before and after they get their cochlear implant. One cochlear implant costs upwards of \$40,000. That does not include the training before and after the surgery. The audiologists who meet parents and diagnose their child's hearing loss have plenty of brochures, fliers, magazines, and even CDs and DVDs on the Audio Verbal Therapy (AVT) approach.

A private school education, concentrating on AVT can cost parents plenty of money. It will take years of continuous therapy to reach an acceptable degree of verbal communication, such as speaking on the telephone, ordering food at restaurants, and even simply saying "I love you." Private institutions and companies are purposefully vague on the statistics regarding how successful (What's success? What's considered as an acceptable measure of success?) a child is after getting a cochlear implant.

Those private institutions and associations in the field of AVT, as well as the cochlear implant industry, along with audiologists, doctors, and other specialists stand to reap millions upon millions profiting on Deaf children if all parents opt for an oral education. These combined groups listed created a special interest group under the guise of California Medical Association (CMA), California Hospital Association (CHA), California Academy of Audiology (CAA), American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), California Speech-Language Hearing Association (CSLHA), California Coalition of six different private oral schools, and California Association of Private Special Education Schools (CAPSE, which has its own lobbying group). The California Coalition in turn is financed by giants in oral education such as Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (AGB), Oberkotter Foundation, and Option Schools. Digging further, one can find out that the corporate founders of AGB are the only bigwigs in the cochlear industry in this country: Cochlear Americas and Advanced Bionics.

The opposition towards AB 2072 requested to investigate the accountability of the bill. Most of the people who make up the opposition are Deaf themselves, growing up in a community where they use ASL and work with Deaf children who are either fluent in ASL or might have been reared in the oral education approach. To this date, all of their amendments, suggestions, perspectives, and protestations were ignored. Assemblyman Mendoza has disregarded Deaf people, who know what it is like to be Deaf living in this state, and intends to provide the parents with all the options from everyone except for the collective signing community.

The AB 2072 bill was recognized as flawed, and catered to special interest groups. Despite the deaf community's opposition it has been passing with flying colors throughout the floors of Assembly and currently the Senate. There is only one answer to this: money.

Assemblyman Tony Mendoza, the author of the bill, was given a total of \$40,800 from three associations: CMA, CHA, and AFSCME California. There are twenty senators out of thirty-nine who have received more than \$30,000 in contributions each from these same special interest groups. In total a staggering \$1,203,326 has been donated, from the top six sponsors based on the Legislative analysis of the bill. CMA takes the lead, with \$698,649 funneled into the senators' campaign funds. The next two top players are AFSCME California with \$299,900 and CHA with \$147,127. It is no small wonder as to why the senate showed a lack of interest in listening to every side of this bill. It is not surprising how quickly the bill went through different committees and the floor of Assembly. These very same names that were mentioned above show up on AB 2072 as the bill sponsors.

Researching further on the Internet, one can find out that Tony Mendoza is widely regarded as a sleazy politician for his willingness to work with those who can fund him. He is not the only one at the Capitol in Sacramento concerning himself with special interest groups. This is a disease happening everywhere in this country. We, the opposition of AB 2072, are taking a stand against this type of one-sided information. Our side is a mere plankton facing a mammoth blue whale of corporate greed. The only thing that can set the truth free is our laws protecting freedom of speech and justice. We need to divorce from the medical experts with a multi-million interest in the direct rape of deaf babies. Now is the time to make our final stand.

## Note:

This is an edited version of “The Last Stand for the Deaf in California” which was published in *The Cutting Edge News* on August 23, 2010: <http://www.thecuttingedgenews.com/index.php?article=12511>

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