

Rep. Brostoff: Statement on Waukesha County v. J.J.H.

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MILWAUKEE – In response to the Supreme Court of Wisconsin’s decision earlier today to [dismiss](#) the case Waukesha County v. J.J.H. as improvidently granted, State Representative Jonathan Brostoff (D-Milwaukee) released the following statement:

“I am livid at today’s Supreme Court decision. This case shows a clear example of our justice system openly ignoring the Constitutional rights of a young Deaf woman, and all our state Supreme Court can manage in response is a shrug. When I attended the oral arguments for this case earlier this month, what I witnessed was a gross, ignorant and inexcusable miscarriage of justice in a system rigged against Deaf people from the beginning. For our court system to imply in any way that Deaf individuals without interpreters are able to be active and informed participants in a courtroom designed for the hearing community is irresponsible, it is discriminatory, and it is fundamentally unjust.”

The case Waukesha County v. J.J.H. revolves around a Deaf Wisconsinite with a developmental disability, alias “Julie,” who was involuntarily committed to a mental hospital after Waukesha County alleged that she had a mood disorder that could result in harm to herself or others. During the required legal hearing process following her detention, “Julie” was denied access to necessary and legally-mandated sign language interpreters because the court could not secure any within the 72-hour period within which state law requires hearings on involuntary commitment to be held. As a result, “Julie” was not able to understand the proceedings of the case against her, to confer with her legal counsel, or to actively participate in her own defense – all clearly infringing on her right to due process.

“Cases like this one drive home just how important Deaf visibility and Deaf access remain not only in our state, but across the country. Until our justice system and

our society can unequivocally demonstrate an understanding that the rights of Deaf individuals are equal to and just as important as those of anyone else, we have clear and important work to do. I genuinely hope to see this case make its way to the US Supreme Court, and to see a ruling that ensures a miscarriage of justice like this never happens again. Deaf rights are human rights, and I promise to never give up the fight on behalf of the Deaf community.”