



**EMPIRE STATE ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF
INCORPORATED**
AN ORGANIZATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE INTERESTS OF
THE DEAF

Empire State Association of the Deaf, Inc.
49 Brookfield Rd. Apt C-5
Wallkill, NY 12589
(www.ESAD.org)



July 28, 2022

President

Vernon Bonse

Vice President

Steve Lovi

Secretary

Colette Steves

Treasurer

Susan Snyder

Board Members

Merton Snyder

Heather Shaffer

Deb Pardi

Michael Cross

David Wantuck

Jerald Creer

Dear Ms. Pryntz:

ESAD is pleased to provide this letter of support to Deaf Refugee Advocacy (DRA), regarding the Monroe County American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant application. DRA has been providing on-going community support with extremely at-risk citizens: deaf refugees, immigrants, and asylum-seekers (RIAs) during the past few years.

DRA's ARPA grant proposal summary is as follows: Deaf Refugee Advocacy Community Connections (DRACC), as a Sign Language-centric program, aims to support deaf, deafblind and hard-of-hearing refugees, immigrants, and asylees (RIAs) navigate the unique challenges they face other providers are unable to meet due to systemic language, cultural, and accessibility barriers. These barriers were both made evident and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic but have yet to be addressed. Designed, led, and operated by people who are deaf, the DRACC will provide health, safety, and employment programming to individuals and their families, strengthening RIAs' skills, support networks, and sense of belonging so that they thrive as members of the Monroe County community.

ESAD is aware there are significant inequities, systemic barriers, and disparities that exist for this population. DRA's transformative approach addresses the inequities and will meet the needs of this population which will ultimately impact the betterment of our community in Monroe County. ESAD has worked with the Rochester/Monroe County since its' 1865 inception for over 150+ years in advocating for the rights and protection of the Deaf community. Our Rochester representatives include Mr. Steve Lovi, Vice-President and Mr. Jerald Creer, Finger Lakes Region Board Member.

Please do not hesitate to contact our ESAD Board of Directors if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
ESAD Board of Directors

ESAD Board of Directors