



THE FLORIDA SENATE

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SENATOR DARREN SOTO

Democratic Caucus Rules Chair
14th District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SENATOR SOTO'S "DEAF FLORIDIANS ID BILL" SIGNED BY GOVERNOR

TALLAHASSEE – Deaf Floridians facing communication barriers in confrontations with law enforcement will now have critical assistance thanks to legislation sponsored by Sen. Darren Soto (D-Orlando) and signed by Governor Rick Scott.

The "Deaf Floridians ID Bill" permits the international symbol for being deaf or hard of hearing to appear on identification cards or driver's license. This legislation is in response to several incidents of confusion and unnecessary escalation during encounters between police and deaf Floridians including a recent incident by constituent Lorraine Velazquez. This legislation allows people who suffer from a hearing impairment to further identify themselves and their condition.

"In the event of a stop or arrest, it is critical to both deaf citizens and law enforcement that their unique abilities are clearly known to safeguard public safety and constitutional rights," stated Senator Soto.

"I'm excited about this. This legislation has fulfilled a need of many deaf constituents in the state of Florida," said Representative Victor Torres (D-Orlando), who cosponsored the measure in the House. "I feel that this will enhance the quality of life for those that are affected by loss of hearing or are hard of hearing. Having the international symbol for the deaf on their ID or license will facilitate communications between constituents and law enforcement here in Florida and also around the world."

The "Deaf Floridians ID Bill" (SB 740), carried on HB 7061 approved by the governor, will take effect July 1, 2016.

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