

STEIN & VARGAS LLP

Overcoming Barriers | Ensuring Communication | Creating Access

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 8, 2018

BOCES SUED FOR DISCRIMINATION

Huntington Station, NY—Ryan Griske of Lindenhurst, New York, filed suit today in federal court against Western Suffolk Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) for discrimination based on disability in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and the New York State Human Rights Law. BOCES, a state operated educational program that provides adult education, refused to provide interpreters so that Griske, who is deaf and uses sign language, could access a plumbing class.

Griske wanted to learn plumbing skills so he could do repairs around his home. He repeatedly attempted to enroll in the Plumber I adult education class offered by BOCES. Instead of providing sign language interpreters, BOCES required Griske to provide proof that he would arrange for his own sign language interpreters for the class. Both federal and state law require BOCES to provide and pay for sign language interpreters.

Howard Rosenblum, CEO of the National Association of the Deaf said, “Law schools, medical schools, and universities are following the law and providing interpreters for deaf students. It is unacceptable that in 2018 any program would refuse equal access and then ask a deaf person to pay to bring his own interpreters.”

Griske said, “Everyone can go into BOCES and take any kind of class. Why am I being treated differently just because I am deaf? I just want to learn plumbing but BOCES will not allow me unless I bring my own interpreter even though this is against the law.”

###

National Association of the Deaf is the nation’s premier civil rights organization of, by, and for, deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the United States.

Stein & Vargas, LLP is a civil rights firm based in Washington, D.C. and committed to the principle that all people have full and equal access to all parts of society.

CONTACTS:

National Association of the Deaf

Lizzie Sorkin

301-587-1788

lizzie.sorkin@nad.org

Stein & Vargas, LLP

Mary Vargas

240-793-3185

Mary.Vargas@steinvargas.com