

Disability Rights Connecticut

"Connecticut's protection and advocacy system"

846 Wethersfield Avenue
Hartford, CT 06114

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 9, 2018

Hartford, CT – Marisa Felix, a deaf woman from Windsor filed suit in federal court this week against Hartford Healthcare, Inc., the entity that operates Hartford Hospital, for discrimination based on disability in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504. The suit relates to Felix's 12-day hospitalization at Hartford Hospital without any access to communication.

Felix communicates in American Sign Language and needs qualified sign language interpreters in order to participate in her own health care. During her 12-day hospitalization, Felix repeatedly requested interpreters so that she could communicate with her healthcare providers, but Hartford Hospital, despite acknowledging an inability to communicate effectively, refused to provide interpreters and instead relied on gestures and other ineffective means of communication. As a result, Felix was unable to provide details about her complex medical history, and was prevented from access to communication relating to tests, procedures, diagnoses, medications, and instructions for follow up care.

Felix, who is a cancer survivor, endured 12 days of diagnostic procedures and eventually surgery without interpreters provided by the hospital as is required by federal law. She experienced pain, confusion and great emotional distress because of the lack of any, let alone effective, communication.

Both the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 require hospitals to ensure effective communication with people who are deaf. Nancy Alisberg, one of the attorneys representing Felix said, "As one of the hospitals involved in a landmark settlement in 1998 on this exact issue, Hartford Hospital is well aware of its obligations to ensure effective communication with the deaf community under the ADA."

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Stein & Vargas is a civil rights law firm committed to the principle that all people have full and equal access to all parts of American society.

Disability Rights Connecticut is the protection and advocacy agency for the State of Connecticut.

For further comment you may contact:

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