

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**LAWSUIT ALLEGES CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY FAILED TO  
PROVIDE COMMUNICATION SERVICES TO DEAF STUDENT**

**Los Angeles, California** – On January 15, 2020, a deaf former California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA) graduate student filed a civil rights lawsuit under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other state and federal laws, alleging that the university failed to provide him necessary sign language and communication services, forcing him to drop out of a Special Education Counseling degree program.

Mr. Gamaliel Datugan requires American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate with others and to access the aural components of his educational program, such as verbal lectures or classroom discussion. Mr. Datugan also uses closed captioning to access educational content presented in a video format.

The lawsuit, filed against the Board of Trustees of the California State University by the Disability Rights Legal Center (DRLC) and the Almazan Finneman law firm, alleges that CSULA denied Mr. Datugan the effective communication services he needs, preventing him from fully accessing his course material, and denying him the ability to participate in mock counseling sessions and classroom discussions.

The lawsuit alleges that CSULA's alleged discrimination ultimately forced him to withdraw from the graduate-level Charter College of Education, Division of Special Education and Counseling program, and that CSULA's actions caused him substantial emotional and financial harm.

A passionate advocate for promoting postsecondary education opportunities for those with hearing loss, Mr. Datugan applied to CSULA's Special Education and Counseling program with the express goal of becoming a college counselor and helping students with hearing loss navigate the same obstacles he encountered in his college experience.

“I am still devastated to this day by Cal State LA’s failure to allow me to complete the degree program of my choice – that would’ve helped me help other students with disabilities. It was just wrong, and it feels good to enforce my legal rights,” said Mr. Datugan through an ASL interpreter.

“CSULA instructors and administrators ignored Mr. Datugan’s repeated requests for help accessing the variety of aural information in his graduate classes. I applaud him for standing up for equal access under the law—and for working to pave a path to accessibility for future students with disabilities at CSULA,” said Trevor Finneman of Almazan | Finneman, one of the attorneys for Mr. Datugan.

Mr. Datugan is available for in-person or telephonic interviews. Please arrange through his attorneys.

#### About Disability Rights Legal Center

Founded in 1975, the Disability Rights Legal Center is the nation’s oldest national non-profit public interest cross disability law center. The organization’s mission is to champion the rights of people with disabilities through education, advocacy and litigation. [www.thedrlc.org](http://www.thedrlc.org)

#### About Almazan | Finneman

Almazan | Finneman is a plaintiff’s law firm that provides legal representation in the areas of employment law, civil and disability rights, and personal injury. Almazan | Finneman strives to provide the highest quality legal services, prosecuting cases aggressively and creatively to achieve the best possible results for clients. [www.alfilaw.com](http://www.alfilaw.com)