

February 5, 2015

Senate Assistant Majority Leader Sara Gelser  
Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Human Services and Early Childhood  
900 Court St. NE, S-405  
Salem, Oregon 97301

**RE: Senate Bill 449**

Dear Senator Sara Gelser:

On behalf of the National Association of State Agencies of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NASADHH), I am writing to urge you and your Senate Committee on Human Services and Early Childhood to support more than 780,000\* Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing constituents who have been underrepresented and underserved in the State of Oregon who have frequently encountered obstacles related to communication access provisions in order to receive services in various settings. This 1/5 of population deserves to be active and equal members in society. Please support Senate Bill 449 to create Office for Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Services in Department of Human Services.

With the passage of Senate Bill 449, the office with the expertise in deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing would be able to consult and collaborate with all public and private entities to ensure that the effective policies and procedures on communication access are in place, the rights of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing are protected in all areas including education, healthcare, employment, and public accommodations, and to promote public awareness about the prevention and safety of hearing, all coming from the state level.

Currently, the lack of information available to state and public entities about their language and communication needs has resulted in a complaint-driven process to evaluate the effectiveness of access and efforts to provide access as required by federal and state laws. Given the complex bureaucracy, coupled with the stigma of suffering from underserved and underrepresented, it is extremely difficult to appeal

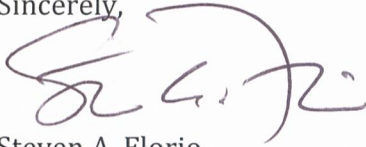
denials of service, let alone file complaints. These complaint numbers are additionally skewed because it places the burden on a person who is likely grappling with a lack of information or guidance to voluntarily file a complaint and cope with a new morass of red tape.

Finally, the passage of SB 449 saves the state of Oregon money and at the same time, SB 449 improves the quality of life of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians. Therefore, quality access to services, programs, employment, and any other opportunities reduces state expenditures overall.

The NASADHH represents 38 active state agencies of the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing. The purpose of NASADHH is to promote the implementation of best practices in the provisions of services through information sharing, professional development, and maintain networking among state agencies because all topics and challenges are very unique and specialized.

For all these reasons, the NASADHH strongly urges you and your Senate Committee on Human Services and Early Childhood to support SB 449 when it comes before you for a vote.

Sincerely,



Steven A. Florio  
President of NASADHH  
Executive Director of RI Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

CC: Senator Alan Olsen, Vice Chairperson  
Senate Assistant Majority Leader Michael Dembrow, Member  
Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, Member  
Senator Jeff Kruse, Member  
NASADHH Executive Board members

\*Table 1. Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for the United States, Regions, States, and Puerto Rico: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2014 (NST-EST2014-01), Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Release Date: December 2014

20.3% Population – Johns Hopkins researchers and published in the November 14 2011, *Archives of Internal Medicine*, [Frank Lin, M.D., Ph.D.](#)