

March 19, 2015

Senator Sara Gelser, Chair
Senate Committee on Health Care and Early Childhood
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Senator Sara Gelser,

Over 186,000 Oregonians are living with hearing loss. Hearing loss is an “invisible” disability. It is easily overlooked, and underserved. As Oregon Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Affiliate Chapter President and professional sign language interpreter, I see on a daily basis the struggles the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Oregonians face related to access. Oregonians with hearing loss are underserved. For years they have been unable to receive direct communication access and supporting services from state agencies, non-profit organizations, and businesses because those agencies do not provide the necessary cultural and linguistic competency services, nor can existing budgets of governmental programs begin to accommodate those services. Oregonians with hearing loss encounter daily discrimination, oppression, and barriers to employment and recreation. Senate Bill 449 will begin to remove those barriers.

Senate Bill 449 will establish an Office of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Services (ODDBHHS) in Oregon. The Office will provide information, referral, advocacy, case management, education, and training, and will serve as the state authority on Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing citizens. It will address the entire range of needs of its clients, a range of needs that spans from the birth to the grave. It will begin to provide the functional equivalency for employment, recreation, and life that these citizens deserve.

Oregon Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf supports Senate Bill 449. The establishment of the above mentioned office is necessary. Currently there is no single place for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals to seek services, inquire about Deaf related topics/issues, ask about resources available and find answers to questions pertinent to life.

Please support Senate Bill 449.

Sincerely,

Susie Friberg,
President - Oregon Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf
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