



ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND

IN OREGON

March 4, 2015

The Hon. Sara Gelser,
Chairwoman before the Senate Committee on Health Care and Early Childhood
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Honorable Chairwoman Gelser,

I am writing in **strong support of SB 449**, and am encouraging you and your Committee to bring this bill to the floor of the Senate with a **DO PASS recommendation**.

I am currently the Director of Catholic Deaf Ministry for the Archdiocese of Portland, and have served in this position for the past 23 years. During this time I have become acutely aware of the lack of services and opportunities available to individuals in our state who are Deaf, DeafBlind or Hard of Hearing. This is especially evident when these persons are experiencing crisis or transition times. There is no designated place or program they can turn to in seeking the support, guidance and counseling they need to help them regain their stability. **A permanent Office for Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Services would provide these much needed resources.**

Trying to negotiate one's way through agencies and systems is a huge challenge without appropriate information and Sign Language communication services. Furthermore, persons providing this support need to have a strong understanding of Deaf Culture and the specific needs of this community. **Leaders of the Deaf Community in Oregon have worked tirelessly for many years to attain equal access to services provided for others in our state, but with no lasting results. The ODDBHH, with local service centers, would assure these Oregonians that their "voices" have finally been heard.**

I thank you for your consideration and support of this important legislative matter.

Sincerely,

Sr. Linda Roby, BVM
Director of Catholic Deaf Ministry
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