



Date March 25, 2015

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

Senator Gelser and Committee Members,

An estimated 186,000 Oregonians are living with hearing loss. Hearing loss is an “invisible” disability. It is easily overlooked, and underserved, therefore Oregonians with hearing loss are underserved. Historically these Oregonians have encountered barriers to culturally and linguistically appropriate access to services from state agencies, non-profit organizations, and businesses because those organizations do not understand the needs of this population, nor do they know how to effectively provide services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. Oregonians with hearing loss encounter daily discrimination, oppression, and barriers to employment and public accommodation, including medical and mental health services. Senate Bill 449 will begin to remove those barriers.

Senate Bill 449 will establish an Office of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Services (ODDBHHS) in Oregon. This program will provide information, referral, advocacy, case management, education, and training, and will serve as the state authority on Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing individuals. It will address the entire range of needs of deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing Oregonians, a range of needs that spans from the birth to the grave. It will begin to provide the functional equivalency for access to services that these citizens deserve.

The Oregon Psychological Association (OPA) has reviewed Senate Bill 449, as well as the proposed amendments submitted by Senator Monnes-Anderson. We are in support of Senate Bill 449 with the proposed – 1 amendments.

With that amendment in place, OPA supports Senate Bill 449 and respectfully requests that the committee vote to pass.