



STATE SENATE
DISTRICT 25

SB 449

Establishing an Oregon Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Services Program
March 26, 2015

We have neglected the deaf community for far too long in the state of Oregon. SB 449 establishes the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard-of-Hearing Program within DHS. We need to do better and this bill is a great start.

Imagine a world without sound and the frustration of trying to express what you feel or need to others. In America, there are approximately 28 million hearing-impaired individuals. Cochlear implants have brought hearing to some, while others in the deaf culture opt to keep sign language as their method of communication.

The deaf can also feel left out in situations. My sister who is two years older than I am would always be asking me what did they say when we were watching TV. Since they can't hear, it is dangerous to go places alone. They can't hear cars, bikes, or other people coming. They also can't hear warnings like 'watch out!' or 'fire!' or directions in times of need.

I have heard stories of police using the offender to interpret for the deaf victim, of difficulties in employment and of not being able to know what is being said at public meetings. Many deaf people feel one of their biggest difficulties is the hearing culture that treats them as though they are handicapped, people to be pitied or changed.

The deaf are just as important to our society as anyone else. Let's send SB 449 to Ways and Means. Thank you all for considering this very important piece of legislation.