

April 12, 2017

Senator Betsy Johnson, Chair  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic  
Development  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Senator Johnson, and the Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development,

As a member of the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing community, I ask you to support SB  
84. The State of Oregon lacks critical access to direct interconnected voice over internet protocol  
services (VoIP) for telephone customers who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, or Hard of Hearing and for  
these with speech impairments.

Hearing loss need no longer be a significant barrier to communication, thanks to today's  
technology. Before video relay services, real-time captioning, and video remote interpreting, and  
other innovations, losing your hearing excluded you from normal participation in educational,  
public and social affairs. The emotional and psychological impacts of that exclusion can be  
profound for persons of every age, and can be costly.

Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing people are still being excluded, despite availability of  
communication technology. Businesses, government programs, and social services are under  
informed about the available communication technologies and are under informed about legal  
provisions to accommodate people who need them.

A tiny number of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing people can advocate for their own  
communication rights, and do so tirelessly every time they encounter a new business or a new  
organization or program. The clear majority doesn't know their rights, and are unable to access  
consultation to mitigate the resulting emotional and psychological impacts of exclusion, or  
prevent them altogether. There is no designated place or program they can turn to for the support,  
guidance and counseling they need to regain stability. Oregon Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of  
Hearing services would provide these much-needed resources.

I ask you and your subcommittee to bring SB 84 with a **DO PASS** recommendation. Thank you  
for your consideration and support.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SMB', is written over a horizontal line.

Steven M Brown, MPA MA  
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