

April 2, 2019

Senator Sara Gelser  
State of Oregon  
Senate Human Services Committee

**RE: Senate Bill 493**

As the president of the Oregon Speech-Language and Hearing Association and on behalf of the 2000 licensed Speech-Language Pathologists in the state of Oregon, I am writing in support of Senate bill 493 which "Establishes Oregon Human Rights Commission to safeguard the dignity and basic human rights of individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities and to ensure that the individuals have an independent choice with respect to the services." Additionally, I am writing to recommend that a licensed Speech-Language Pathologist be included as a member of the commission.

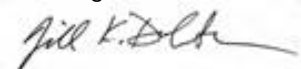
The purpose of Bill SB 493 is to ensure that individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) have an independent choice with respect to the services that an individual receives. In making a choice, an individual must be able to understand the options and then be able to express personal preferences. Communication is key.

Speech-Language Pathologists are clinical experts who provide assessment and treatment to children and adults living with IDD in the areas of speech, receptive and expressive language, social communication, partner strategies. They are also experts in Alternative and Augmentative communication, providing solutions for individuals who are nonspeaking or who communicate in nontraditional ways. These communication supports and services are essential in order for many individuals with IDD to effectively understand and make independent choices.

Speech-Language Pathologists provide evidenced-based best practices and strive to make effective communication a basic right, accessible and achievable for all. At the basis of our work is the Communication Bill of Rights, which was drafted over twenty years ago by the National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities (NJC) with active participation of our national organization, The American Speech Hearing Association. The Communication Bill of Rights has also been adopted by the Oregon Home Care Commission (OHCC) as a central component for training Personal Support Workers in Oregon. The curriculum for OHCC class "Everyone Communicates" was written by a licensed speech-language pathologist who currently serves as the instructor.

Senate Bill 493 currently proposes nine members to be appointed by the governor and serve on commission. Included is a "service provider" (broadly defined in 427.101) and a member who is an "expert regarding behavioral intervention models." There is no specific mention of a member having expertise specifically related to communication. As an expert in communication, a Speech-Language Pathologist would be a valuable advocate for the dignity and basic human rights of individuals with IDD and we recommend their inclusion on the commission.

Best regards,



Jill Dolata, PhD, CCC-SLP  
President, Oregon Speech-Language & Hearing Association