



Oregon Legislature
House Committee on Education
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

February 5, 2023

SUBJECT: HB 2669 • Bill of Rights for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing in Education

To the Chair Rep. Neron, Co-Vice-Chair Rep. Hudson, Co-Vice-Chair Rep. Wright, and members of the House Committee on Education

Hello! This letter is intended to provide public education and increase awareness of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians. For so many years, this language and culturally marginalized group have been denied access to information, goods, and services in the State of Oregon. The final report in 2016 of the [Community-based Needs Assessment \(CNA\) of Oregon's Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) communities conducted by the Research & Resource Center on Deaf communities at Western Oregon University as this was funded by the 2015 Oregon Legislature, we were able to learn countless challenges and barriers. Despite the assessment's findings, legislators did not pass proposed legislation in 2017 that would have met critical community needs, prompting the establishment of Bridges Oregon.

Bridges Oregon, Inc. is a nonprofit organization serving Oregonians who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or Hard of Hearing or face other communication barriers. It is in our mission to facilitate equity and inclusiveness and to provide a bridge to opportunities through advocacy, education and communication.

Some examples of data from the CNA report on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Children in education settings:

- *"The parent of a 6 year old oral child shared her frustration related to lack of options, "I want to get it there [in records] that Portland Public Schools does not have a truly oral option. They have total communication option and sign language option, they don't have an oral education option, I find that to be breaking the law for Deaf and hard of hearing students where they don't have fully oral option if that is the communication mode that parent has chosen for that child."* (pp. 30-31, CNA report).
- *"A parent of 8 year old child asks: "In Portland Public School it is \$25,000 per kid which is why they don't want to release that money [to pay for other options]. They want to keep it in the school and they feel that they can use the IEP and spend the money that*



way. I use that in quotation marks but 15 minutes of speech a week for an investment of \$25,000 for ten months of the school year, what's my ROI?" (pp. 31, CNA report).

- *"A parent of 8 year old daughter who goes to Oregon School for the Deaf expressed her struggle with the system at the school district, "There's no real happy medium. ...She can't go into two different programs or go half day to one school [OSD] and another half day at another [mainstream at hearing school], or different ways of combining them. At that young age, there is no way the parents are going to know what the best fit is yet for their child." (pp. 31, CNA report).*
- *"We see a lot of Deaf children being very isolated. So they're in the neighborhood school but they're not really integrated into the community because of the language barrier and we're seeing a lot of mental health problems in the Deaf community because of their isolation," expressed a parent of a Deaf child who is also a teacher. (pp. 31, CNA report). (pp. 31, CNA report).*
- *"Many more concerns were expressed by parents of Deaf children, "There is a lot of training for hearing teachers. I don't know if you know that concept of 'you have to be Deaf to get it.' Takes one to know one kind of thing. As a Deaf person, I know what the Deaf experience is like and the same thing goes for any deaf teachers. So they understand what a Deaf child is experiencing...their world view and their world experience. It's so nuanced. It's so different from interaction with non-deaf people. And it's so easy for someone who is not Deaf to miss these very small subtle aspects in facial expression and body movements that are so meaningful." (pp. 31, CNA report).*
- *"An interesting point made by parents of Deaf children, "You know, we have all these policy makers, almost all of them are hearing and so they're making decisions that greatly impact Deaf people's lives without understanding their Deaf world and the Deaf experience." (pp. 30-31, CNA report).*
- *"The parent of an adopted 7 year old hard of hearing child with progressive vision loss in Southern Oregon shared, "My child was originally put in a program for children with severe delays or disability. I pulled him out after 2 days because he is not autistic and didn't fit in the category as a Deaf individual. The classroom was full of stimulation [meaning lots of adults and children talking at the same time] going on and the Deaf child will miss out all the information because the information is not being communicated to him directly." He was eventually put into a different school with self- contained classroom but did not have an audiologist coming in until the parent fought with the district, "He was receiving speech therapy via a computer which was obviously ineffective. After a lot of negotiating and pushing and pulling and documenting, I finally got a speech therapist to come in once a week to work with him at the school. I felt we like we lost six to eight weeks because of this. I also feel like here in this county I have to fight for everything. As a result, he doesn't know how to interact with hearing children because of his delay and isolation is a struggle. He's not able to do things that other kids get to do, like go to camp. Because they won't have an interpreter. Even doing Boys Scouts, you know, not having an interpreter for Boy Scouts [they have asked for one*



multiple times]...He watched his older brother [hearing] going to camps and Boys Scout all summer and it hurts.” (pp. 31-32, CNA report).

- *“A parent of 7 month old baby expressed her frustration with an early intervention program on communication, “The early intervention preschool right now, the only preschool I could get a hold of that had any sign support and with a hearing specialist, doesn’t get it.” (pp. 32, CNA report).*
- *“Another parent of a 5 year old hard of hearing child continued, “That sounds so crazy to me that they’re not encouraging signing because even for kids without hearing loss now it’s like baby signing, baby signing. They can communicate what they want to you instead of crying. It seems very odd that anyone would advocate the opposite.” (pp. 32, CNA report).*
- *“Another parent of an adult hard of hearing student added, “I always hear the phrase hearing aids are not like eyeglasses. You know, they don’t give you 20/20 hearing. Are you finding that the people you work with understand that? Do their teachers understand that? Even now, we still have to educate school districts on this. They [mainstream programs] do not understand. They don’t get it. They still think that the [Deaf or hard of hearing] kids just don’t listen. They’re the ones not listening.” (pp. 35, CNA report).*
- *“Another angry parent of a Deaf child stated, “I think that Portland Public Schools wants my daughter to fail and fail badly before I could look at another option before they were pushed hard enough to move.” (pp. 36, CNA report).*

This Bill of Rights will provide information and resources to over 1,400 Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing children in education settings. It is very critical for the parents of Deaf, DeafBlind, and/or Hard of Hearing children to understand, realize, and recognize the rights of their own children in the education settings.

I leave you a copy of brochure and position statement when it come with Education system and the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing children.

I beseech you to recognize the need in implementing Bill of Rights for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing children in education settings as they are culturally specific and linguistically marginalized population in our state. Please vote yes to HB 2669.

Sincerely,

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Executive Director