



Oregon Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

February 5, 2024

To the Esteemed Chair, Vice Chair, and Esteemed Members of the Committee, I hope this email finds you well. I am reaching out to you with a deep sense of purpose and commitment to shed light on the needs of our Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities in Oregon.

As the Executive Director of Bridges Oregon, Inc., a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting equity and inclusiveness for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians facing communication barriers, I am compelled to bring to your attention the challenges and barriers encountered by this culturally and linguistically diverse community.

Based on the comprehensive final report from the 2016 [Community-based Needs Assessment \(CNA\) of Oregon's Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) communities, funded by the 2015 Oregon Legislature, we have gained valuable insights into the myriad challenges and obstacles faced by this community.

One of the key challenges highlighted in the assessment is the housing insecurity experienced by a significant portion of our community. According to the report, nearly one-third of respondents reported an annual household income below \$25,000, with many expressing concerns about housing affordability and accessibility.

I am grateful for the support Bridges Oregon has received, including the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding, which, though extended until September 30, 2024, remains insufficient to fully address the housing crisis among Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians. Additionally, limited funding from the Oregon Department of Justice Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division (CVSSD) Survivor Housing Fund (SHF) and the Fair Housing Council of Oregon (FHCO) has hindered our ability to establish culturally specific and linguistically responsive staff positions dedicated to addressing this crisis.

Despite these challenges, we have made a tangible impact in the lives of individuals facing housing insecurity. Through our limited resources, we have provided temporary accommodations, covered moving costs, facilitated communication with landlords, and supported individuals in securing stable housing arrangements.

Allow me to share a few examples of our interventions:

- We provided temporary lodging for individuals facing delays in the section-8 application process, ensuring they had a roof over their heads during transitions.

1115 Madison St NE, #1069 • Salem, OR 97301
(971) 202-1500 • info@bridgesoregon.org • BridgesOregon.org

- We advocated for accommodations such as visual and smoke alarms for individuals with specific needs, ensuring their safety and well-being.
- We assisted individuals with setting up necessary communication systems in their homes, such as flashing lights for door notifications, improving their quality of life and independence.
- We facilitated the transition from temporary accommodations to stable housing for families facing eviction, ensuring they had a safe and stable living environment.

I invite you to view a testimonial from one of our constituents <https://youtu.be/pEo3v8CucnA>, which underscores the importance of our work and the critical need for continued support from state agencies and legislative bodies.

These stories underscore the importance of our work and the critical need for continued support from state agencies and legislative bodies. As we navigate the complexities of funding limitations, it is imperative that we collectively advocate for a commitment to addressing the survivor and housing crisis within our communities.

In closing, I urge the Committee to recognize the importance of actively including Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing constituents in legislative and policy decisions. By working together, we can ensure that the voices of marginalized communities are heard and their needs are addressed.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I welcome further discussions and collaboration on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Chad A. Ludwig, MSW, ADAC, OHCI, CDI
Executive Director

cc: Oregon Association of the Deaf
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