



Oregon Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

February 5, 2024

To the Esteemed Chair, Vice Chair, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Greetings! This letter is crafted with the intent to foster understanding and raise awareness regarding the needs of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians within our state. Over the years, this culturally and linguistically diverse community has faced barriers in accessing essential information, goods, and services across Oregon.

Established in 2017, Bridges Oregon, Inc. stands as a statewide culturally and linguistically specific and responsive 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.

It is crucial to acknowledge the necessity of making statewide voter pamphlets accessible to the American Sign Language (ASL) community.

- ASL is the third commonly used language in the United States, following English and Spanish. (source: Wiki)
- Additionally, ASL is the second most requested language in State court in Oregon, after Spanish. (source: Oregon Judicial Department, 2021).

Additionally, it is imperative to note that state agencies and vendors receiving state funding are obligated to adhere to Oregon Revised Statute Chapters 659, 659a, 279a, and 279b, and the Americans with Disabilities Act's Title II, as they utilize and receive resources from both the State and Local governments.

We respectfully urge the Committee to advocate for a commitment from the authors and their peers to ensure the active inclusion of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing constituents in their endeavors.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we remain open to 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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