



Testimony for the Oregon Legislature's Ways and Means Committee

Presented by Chad A. Ludwig, MSW, ADAC, CDI
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Good evening Chair, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Chad Ludwig, founder and executive director and I am here as a proud member of Oregon's Deaf community and as a representative of Bridges Oregon—the only statewide nonprofit organization in our state that is linguistically and culturally rooted in serving Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians in their heritage languages, including American Sign Language (ASL), Protactile, and other signed and spoken modalities.

The Deaf community in Oregon continues to face serious and systemic barriers to accessing information, healthcare, and public services due to widespread noncompliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Unlike other cultural and language groups, Deaf individuals are protected under federal disability law, which guarantees the right to effective communication—not as a service, but as a legal accommodation. However, many agencies and providers in Oregon either misunderstand or fail to meet these obligations, resulting in ongoing harm, exclusion, and risk to Deaf individuals.

Bridges Oregon is working to bridge this gap—providing training, advocacy, and education to service providers and policymakers to ensure these civil rights are understood, respected, and upheld. This long-standing oversight must be addressed through stronger enforcement and continued partnership with organizations like Bridges Oregon to protect the rights and dignity of Deaf Oregonians.

From advocacy and case management to communication facilitation and community navigation, our staff—many of whom are Deaf or Hard of Hearing themselves—meet clients where they are, with services that honor their language, culture, and lived experiences.

Without sustained and dedicated state funding, this work is at risk. The needs are growing—especially in rural and underserved areas—but the resources are not. We are stretched thin, and yet we continue to show up every day because we know what's at stake: the human right to be seen, heard, and understood.

I urge this committee to prioritize equitable funding for organizations like Bridges Oregon that are not just serving—but empowering—our communities in the languages and cultures that shape our identities and access to opportunity.

Thank you for your time and for investing in an Oregon where everyone has a voice.