

To Whom It May Concern:

As a professional author, and MC of the Hour That Stretches spoken-word event here in Portland every First Tuesday, it gave me no greater pleasure than to coax my former roommate Josh Knapton to the stage. Josh is a brilliant writer who doesn't think he is, and I've had him back three times. My audiences are so riveted by Josh's work and performance that no one even gets up when he reads, and even the bar gets quiet.

Josh has to watch the wave-form on my monitor to observe all this. Josh has had a 95% hearing loss since he was a kid. He teaches AMSLAN at a local community college, is quite used to public speaking, and blocks his own mic position based on tactile sense of sound.

Josh would have kept all his work in his notebooks and on social media if I hadn't dangled the microphone in front of him. I gave him equal access. The same chance. Because I knew what he could do. And the result is something that's still a little hard to write about, because it is so breathtaking.

Equal access for Deaf/DeafBlind/Hard of Hearing Oregonians ought to be the baseline, not a target. Senate Bill 449 displays that same attitude toward access, in that barriers are simply removed, rather than reshuffled. SB 449 is the proverbial 'blinding flash of the obvious' when put to paper, and it needs to be passed. Please lend your support to the passage of this bill and bring services for the Deaf/DeafBlind/Hard of Hearing up to date in Oregon.

Respects,

Edward Morris  
SE Portland