

March 26, 2015

Senator Sara Gelser, Chair
Senate Committee on Health Care and Early Childhood
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Senator Sara Gelser:

As a citizen of Sandy, Oregon who has been deaf since childhood, **I ask you to support SB 449**. The State of Oregon lacks critical services for people who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or Hard of Hearing. Having previously lived in several other states that have services for people with hearing loss, I am impacted significantly by the lack of services for this population in the state of Oregon.

Hearing loss need no longer be a significant barrier to communication, thanks to today's technology. Before video relay services, real-time captioning, video remote interpreting, and other innovations, losing your hearing meant being excluded from normal participation in educational, public and social affairs. The emotional and psychological impacts of that exclusion can be profound for persons of every age, and can be costly.

Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing people are still being excluded, despite availability of communication technology. Businesses, government programs, and social services are often clueless about available communication technologies and often are not fully aware of legal provisions to accommodate people who need them.

I am one of a very small number of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing people who are able to advocate for their own communication rights, and do so tirelessly every time they encounter a new business, or a new organization or program. Many, many more deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing people do not fully exercise their rights, and are unable to access consultation and case management services to mitigate the resulting emotional and psychological impacts of exclusion, or prevent them altogether. There is no designated place or program they can turn to for the support, guidance and counseling they need to regain stability. Oregon Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing services would provide these much needed resources.

I ask you and your committee to bring SB 449 to the floor in the Senate and House with a **DO PASS** recommendation. Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,



Algene "Genie" Ott

cc: Oregon Association of the Deaf,