

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,

Over 186,000 Oregonians are living with hearing loss. Hearing loss is an “invisible” disability and it is easily overlooked, and underserved. Oregonians with hearing loss are underserved. For years they have been unable to receive direct communication access and supporting services from state agencies, non-profit organizations, and businesses because those agencies do not provide the necessary cultural and linguistic competency services, nor can existing budgets of governmental programs begin to accommodate those services. As an American Sign Language Interpreter, I have witnessed Oregonians with varying hearing loss encounter daily discrimination, oppression, and barriers to employment, education and recreation. Senate Bill 449 will begin to alleviate those barriers.

Senate Bill 449 will establish an Office of Deaf, Deaf Blind, and Hard of Hearing Services (ODDBHHS) in Oregon. The Office will provide information, referral, advocacy, case management, education, and training, and will serve as the state authority on Deaf, Deaf Blind, and Hard of Hearing citizens. It will address the entire range of needs of its clients, a range of needs that spans from the birth to the grave. It will begin to provide the functional equivalency for employment, recreation, and life that these citizens deserve.

Please support Senate Bill 449.

Sincerely,

Janelle Reeves  
P.O. Box 5781  
Salem, OR 97304

cc: Oregon Association of the Deaf, Inc.  
file