

March 11, 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. 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. Oregonians with hearing loss encounter daily discrimination, oppression, and barriers to employment and recreation. Senate Bill 449 will begin to remove those barriers.

Senate Bill 449 will establish an Office of Deaf, DeafBlind, 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, DeafBlind, 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,

Tammera J. Richards

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cc: Oregon Association of the Deaf, Inc.
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