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February 20, 2015

The Honorable Sara Gelser,  
Chairwoman before the Senate Committee on Health Care and Early Childhood  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chairwoman Gelser,

Purple Communications, Inc. has learned that Senate Bill 449 has been introduced in the Oregon Legislature to create a permanent Office for Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Services. We are supportive of the efforts of the Oregon Association of the Deaf to have this bill passed, since Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing individuals require targeted social services due to being part of a low-incidence population that is easily overlooked. Many states in the United States have established permanent offices to assist this population because of their great need for social services and the lack of state agencies to provide services with the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Communities that often do not know how to seek or receive services due to their language limitations. These Oregon citizens would be well served by an office that would represent their interests and advocate for their many social service needs.

It is time for Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing individuals in Oregon to have services such as case management, Mental Health counseling, advocacy, community outreach and training, information and referral, interpreting services, as well as SSP (social service providers) to assist the Deaf-Blind. The establishment of the permanent Office for this population would insure that these needed services are highlighted and provided for them. This agency will serve and benefit over 186,000 Oregonians with hearing loss who are in need of service.

As part of the national deaf community, Purple Communications, Inc. is advocating that this legislation be passed into law to benefit this important group of people.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bob Rae", is written over the "Sincerely yours," text.

Bob Rae

CC: Oregon Association of the Deaf