

March 10, 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,

I am a Deaf person, and I urge you to pass SB 449.

Oregon has only one program whose purpose is to meet the needs of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing citizens, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Service Program (ODHHSP). The ODHHSP was commissioned to educate and improve accessibility of Oregon state agencies for their Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing clientele. The program has suffered from chronic lack of funding, and continues to meet state-wide needs inadequately.

Senate Bill 449 would restructure the current program by creating an independent office for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing people. The office would empower Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing to make informed choices for education and employment. It would improve our quality of life by providing services sensitive to our cultural and linguistic needs.

When I first heard about SB 449, I was thrilled. I, my friends, and community members have shared many stories with each other about how the current substandard provision of services in Oregon has impacted us. As you receive testimony from others in the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community, I urge you to listen our stories and support the solution—SB 449.

Sincerely,
Connie Olson

cc: Oregon Association of the Deaf, Inc.
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