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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## OREGON-BASED ORGANIZATIONS UNITE TO ADDRESS THE INEQUITY IN COMMUNICATION ACCESS FOR OREGON DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING INMATES

**September 10, 2014 – Salem, OR** – The Oregon Association of the Deaf (OAD) and Oregon State Chapter of the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (ORID) unite to issue the following public statement endorsing the press release<sup>1</sup> and letter<sup>2</sup> written by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Helping Educate to Advance the Rights of the Deaf (HEARD), and the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID).

On April 17, 2014, the Oregon State Penitentiary in Salem published a notice<sup>3</sup> in their prison newsletter, Walled Street Bulletin, inviting inmates to apply and assume the role of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter for Deaf and Hard of Hearing inmates. NAD, HEARD, and RID urges the Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC) to immediately suspend these recruitment efforts that violate the civil, human, and linguistic rights of Deaf and Hard of Hearing inmates. These organizations raised the following concerns about the use of prisoners to act as “ASL interpreters”:

- *The overall welfare of Oregon Deaf and Hard of Hearing inmates is at risk for abuse and exploitation.*
- *Inmates are generally not “qualified interpreters” who possess the education and certification to practice interpreting nor are they required to adhere to the interpreting profession’s **Code of Ethics** (emphasis added) established by the NAD and RID.*
- *Non-compliance with federal laws and regulations (e.g., Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, etc.) and ODOC Policy No. 40.2.11 on “Effective Communication for Deaf/Hearing Impaired Inmates”.*
- *Fear of emotional, mental, and physical retaliation from prison officials or inmates if the Deaf or Hard of Hearing prisoner reports that they are being deprived equal communication access.*

The civil rights and overall health, safety, and welfare of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing inmates is of paramount concern to OAD and ORID. Therefore, OAD and ORID respectfully demands that the ODOC immediately cease and desist “inmate interpreting” recruitment efforts. Instead, OAD and ORID urges the ODOC to apply immediate corrective action by providing

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.behearddc.org/images/pdf/odoc%20press%20release%20final.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.behearddc.org/images/pdf/letter%20from%20nad%20heard%20rid%20to%20odoc%20-%20final.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://orcure.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/osp-april-17-2014.pdf>



reasonable accommodation in the form of qualified and certified interpreters in appropriate settings to Oregon Deaf and Hard of Hearing inmates.

A copy of OAD and ORID's public statement was sent to Director Peters of the Oregon Department of Corrections, the Oregon Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the Oregon Department of Human Services' Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, and Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber to take action that not only protects the welfare of Oregon Deaf and Hard of Hearing inmates, but ensures that they have equitable communication access through qualified and certified ASL interpreters.

Founded in 1921 and with more than 200 members, OAD's mission is to promote, protect and preserve the civil rights of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing individuals. Visit [www.OAD1921.org](http://www.OAD1921.org) and [www.facebook.com/DeafOregon](https://www.facebook.com/DeafOregon).

Founded in 1964, ORID promotes excellence in the delivery of interpreting services among diverse users of signed and spoken languages through professional development, networking, advocacy, and standards. Visit [www.ORID.org](http://www.ORID.org).

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