

Dear Representative Gelser,

I write you to express my fullest support of Senate Bill 449 and the creation of an office for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing Services within the Department of Human Services (DHS). I am willing to make myself available to give direct testimony in support of this bill and any other avenues which may lead us to correcting what I see as a tremendous dis-service that is taking place to where folks who communicate by American Sign Language (ASL) and receive services via DHS do not receive the same level of services as their peers who communicate via speaking languages.

I believe this bill SB 449 is a very good first step in creating an environment which can lead to correcting the current conditions and vastly improving the lives of folks that I work to support and the many others like them in Oregon.

I am a care provider for a non-profit in Eugene Oregon which provides support services to folks who are Intellectually Developmentally Disabled (IDD). I have worked closely with many folks who are also Deaf in addition to having IDD's.

You and I have communicated a few times in the past Feb 2013, May and June of 2014 on this same subject. Where I conveyed my observations as to the great many folks in Oregon who have IDD's, are deaf and communicate in American Sign Language (ASL). These folks are funded through the DD50, DD51 and DD54 programs of our state via DHS but do not receive services to the same extent as their peers who communicate via speaking languages simply due to their support staff not having adequate abilities to communicate in ASL. There currently is nothing to require providers to provide their services in a language (ASL) that their deaf clientele communicate in. All the while their peers who communicate in speaking languages are getting 'Person Centered Programs', folks who are deaf struggle to communicate their most basic and essential needs and in fact in many cases there is little to no communication possible between the service providers and the person receiving services funded by our state programs.

There is currently no DHS standard of conduct neither for itself nor for the providers contracted which defines appropriate level of language and communication abilities required to execute the programs intended to provide essential services to this vulnerable population that I work with. This bill before our legislation has the potential to create an entity within DHS that can do something real and constructive to change the manner in which these services are provided.

I strongly urge you to support this bill and to contact me if it is found that I may provide any assistance or testimony in getting this bill passed. It is a change so very much needed!

Very Respectfully,

Bill Novorolsky
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CC: Steven Brown: Legislative Committee-Oregon Association of the Deaf, Inc.