

February 27, 2015

To Whom It May Concern,

As I am deaf person, Oregon does not have statewide cultural and linguistic competency standards of service to Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals.

The definition of service in this instance includes case management, Mental Health counseling, advocacy, community outreach, education & training, information & referral, interpreting and communication, as well as support service providers for the DeafBlind. Incidental barriers to communicational access and service access are critically high.

Senate Bill 449 seeks to create a permanent Office for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Services (ODDBHHS). This bill asks the Department of Human Services (DHS) to require that social services be provided for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians statewide.

This agency will serve, route and truly benefit over 186,000 Oregonians with hearing loss who are in need of service. Under current state law (410.740,) the DHS is not required to provide services, even if their advisory committee recommends the implementation of such programs for those who may need assistance.

In 2014, the OAD Legislative Committee met with Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, who agreed to be a chief sponsor of this important bill. For this, we do need your help!

Your support letters will be greatly appreciated, and help the Legislature to finally streamline the quality of life for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community in the great state of Oregon!

Sincerely,

Lee Ellis