



Oregon Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

February 5, 2024

To the Esteemed Chair, Vice Chair, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Greetings! This letter is crafted with the intent to foster understanding and raise awareness regarding the needs of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians within our state. Over the years, this culturally and linguistically diverse community has faced barriers in accessing essential information, goods, and services across Oregon.

Established in 2017, Bridges Oregon, Inc. stands as a statewide culturally and linguistically specific and responsive nonprofit organization serving Oregonians who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or Hard of Hearing or face other communication barriers. It is in our mission to facilitate equity and inclusiveness and to provide a bridge to opportunities through advocacy, education, and communication.

Based on the comprehensive final report from the 2016 [Community-based Needs Assessment \(CNA\) of Oregon's Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) communities, funded by the 2015 Oregon Legislature, we have gained valuable insights into the myriad challenges and obstacles faced by this community.

This correspondence aims to highlight key recommendations from the report to enhance inclusion and support for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals:

- **Transparent Information Sharing:** Recommendations emphasize sharing resources serving individuals with Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing needs in good faith, ensuring objectivity and inclusivity in information dissemination.
- **Effective Communication:** Direct communication between individuals using the same language facilitates more meaningful interactions. In instances where effective communication is hindered, the integration of reasonable accommodations is encouraged.
- **Accessible Training Materials:** Educational videos intended for training purposes should feature Deaf interpreters on screen alongside captioning and readily available written transcripts.

- **Resource Allocation for Accommodations:** Exploring avenues to allocate resources for on-site or virtual accommodations, which may include interpreting services, captioning, assistive-listening devices, and more, is recommended.
- **Support for Family and Children:** When working with families and children within the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community, consider utilizing a team of interpreters proficient in ASL/English and Deaf Interpreters for effective communication.
- **Inclusive Event Notifications:** Ensure that a disclaimer is included on the flyer and in any announcements made to the general public in any form of communication. The suggested language would be: 'If you require a disability-related accommodation, such as an interpreter or live captioning, in order to participate in an event, please notify the designated contact person/department at the provided telephone number and email address at least three business days in advance.'

Additionally, it is imperative to note that state agencies and vendors receiving state funding are obligated to adhere to Oregon Revised Statute Chapters 659, 659a, 279a, and 279b, and the Americans with Disabilities Act's Title II, as they utilize and receive resources from both the State and Local governments.

We respectfully urge the Committee to advocate for a commitment from the authors and their peers to ensure the active inclusion of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing constituents in their endeavors.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we remain open to further discussions and collaboration on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chad A. Ludwig".

Chad A. Ludwig, MSW, ADAC, OHCI, CDI
Executive Director

cc: Oregon Association of the Deaf
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