



March 3, 2021

The Honorable Senator Lee Beyer, Chair
Joint Committee on Transportation
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Honorable Senator Beyer, and the Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

On behalf of Oregon Association of the Deaf (OAD) as Vice President, the Board of Directors and myself wholeheartedly support the passage of House Bill 2498. Furthermore, more than 180 active OAD members support this Bill.

The State of Oregon suffers from a chronic need for provision of access to direct communication with law enforcement officers to Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonian Drivers and Passengers. This Bill 2498 would make the lives of the Drivers functionally equivalent to that of the rest of Oregon's citizens who can hear and talk. Currently Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Drivers are disadvantaged by structural public safety barriers that HB 2585 would begin to remove.

The most common story I have heard from Deaf and Hard of Hearing Drivers. They are scared to communicate with law enforcement officers because they are worried, they would be shot in case if they "act" as if they are not listening to the police officers' instructions upon when they are pulled over. This Bill will able to remove that "fear" because this legislation offers an option for the Drivers to identify themselves as Deaf or Hard of Hearing prior to being pulled over by law enforcement officers. I believe this Bill is a good start for the Drivers to protect themselves from such misunderstandings in communication or to avoid being arrested and/or even being shot.

Supporting HB 2498 is an opportunity for Oregon's leadership to empower Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Drivers by granting access to the functionally equivalent direct communication that they deserve.

Sincerely,

Steven M Brown, MA, LMHC, LPC, NCC
Vice President of Oregon Association of the Deaf
Salem, Oregon

cc: Oregon Association of the Deaf, Inc.
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