

As a mental health professional in Portland, I emphatically give my support for the passage of House Bill 2585. The State of Oregon suffers from a chronic need for provision of access to communication and education to Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians with mental health needs. These services would make the lives of this population functionally equivalent to that of the rest of Oregon's citizens. Currently Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians with mental health needs are disadvantaged by structural barriers that HB 2585 would begin to remove.

As an LMFT-intern who received my entire education in the state of Oregon, I professionally can attest to the lack of services for and training in culturally and linguistically affirmative mental health services for these important populations. To describe it as a state of an emergency is dishearteningly factual, and we must do better. Mental health professionals would also greatly benefit from additional referral sources for our Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing clients to ensure they receive the affirmative services they are entitled to as Oregonians. Agencies and professionals like myself across Oregon are in dire need of additional training to ensure our practices honor these communities fully, and it brings hope to think of the doors the passage of this bill could open for community members.

Supporting HB 2585 is an opportunity for Oregon's leadership to empower Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing by granting access to the functionally equivalent mental health services that they deserve. Please stand with Oregonians and pass HB 2585 today.