



February 21, 2021

Tawna Sanchez, Chair
Raquel Moore-Green, Vice-Chair
Rob Nosse, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Behavioral Health
Oregon Legislature
900 Court St. NE,
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Disability Rights Oregon Testimony on HB 2585

Dear Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chair Moore-Green, and Vice Chair Nosse:

Disability Rights Oregon submits this testimony in support of HB 2585. Disability Rights Oregon is the federally-designated Protection and Advocacy organization for the state of Oregon. Our mission is to protect the rights of people with disabilities, including the rights of people who have mental illness and people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind. 42 USC 10801 *et seq.*; 29 U.S.C. 794e.

Under federal law, every health care organization must ensure that a patient with disabilities can effectively communicate with providers and staff. HB 2585 articulates carefully and in detail the ways in which mental health care providers must accommodate patients who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind. These specific guidelines will make it clear to providers how to accommodate people with disabilities, such as access to specifically qualified and certified interpreters, access to culturally appropriate mental health providers, and

HB 2585 also underlines and reinforces the importance of these accommodations to members of the public who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind. At Disability Rights Oregon, we frequently receive complaints that people with disabilities are not accommodated in medical and mental health settings. Making those guarantees of accommodation explicit in state statutes reiterates and makes concrete the obligation of health care providers to offer reasonable accommodations and effective communication techniques.

Last, creating a standing advisory board to address the needs of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind patients who receive mental health care will allow the state's health care system to continue to innovate and provide the needed services to support these patients. The world around us changes constantly in ways that affect the services needed by these patients, as does the technology that supports it. Thirty years ago, simply TTY machines were the technology for accommodating some Deaf and Hard of Hearing patients, but today the ability to provide medical

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and mental health services via alternative technology has improved far beyond those simple devices. We can be assured that the relevant technology will continue to change, and the input of stakeholders in the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind communities will be essential.

I am happy to discuss these matters by telephone at 503-243-2081 x223 or by email at tstenson@droregon.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Stenson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "T" and "S".

Thomas Stenson
Deputy Legal Director