



# CAMP TALOALI

January 26, 2023

Chair, Michael Denbrow

Vice-Chair, Suzanne Weber

Members of the Senate Education Committee

RE SB-531 – Investing in Community-Based, Culturally Responsible Summer Learning and After-School Programs,

Dear Chair Denbrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am writing this in support of SB 531, which would providing funding for summer learning through Community- Based programs. Camp Taloali, the only camp in Oregon which provides complete accessibility to Deaf and Hard of Hearing children and youth, was one of the recipients of this funding in 2022, and I'd like to share this letter from a Teacher of the Deaf requesting a campership for one of her students. Her words exemplify exactly why Camp Taloali exists. You can find more information about us at [www.taloali.org](http://www.taloali.org), and learn how our 50 year old camp was founded by Deaf and Hard of Hearing professionals and grassroots members, and continues to be governed by Deaf and Hard of Hearing people for the benefit of those who are among the most marginalized members of our Oregon Community.

\*Names are redacted to protect the privacy of campers and their families.

*May 26th, 2022*

*Camp Taloali,*

*My name is [REDACTED] and I am a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist with the [REDACTED] Education Service District. I am currently serving the [REDACTED] School District at the [REDACTED] Elementary Center Site for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education. I am writing on behalf of [REDACTED], mother of [REDACTED] a profoundly Deaf 5th grade student.*

*[REDACTED]'s parents are both immigrants from the [REDACTED]. They came to the US for better opportunities for their children. Since arriving in the US, they have raised a family of 10 children, [REDACTED] being the youngest. [REDACTED] is a part-time, in-home care giver and deacon of her church. Her husband, [REDACTED], is a landscaper and deacon at the same church. The family is actively involved in their church and cherish their [REDACTED] heritage and language.*

██████████ and his family live in ██████████ and ██████████ rides the bus to ██████████ for school. Any extracurricular activities ██████████ participates in (music concerts, graduation, lunch with parents, etc.) requires them to drive South as transportation does not cover extracurricular activities. ██████████ reports that her vehicle takes \$200 to fill up with current gas prices which is an incredible hardship on their family. ██████████ expressed inflation has increased her grocery bills, rent, electricity, and insurance causing undo stress on their family. The family has qualified for food stamps in recent years and the ██████████ community and church give to their family every year for winter holidays. In addition to general bills, the family actively participates in church activities and trips that require out of pocket expenses. ██████████ and his family suffered a horrific house fire three years ago that displaced them into a two-bedroom apartment with the two parents and 5 out of their 10 children. They have yet to recover financially from this travesty.

██████████ is a bright student. He was first exposed to ASL when he came to pre-school, which he attended for 2 years. ██████████ had a Deaf teacher in pre-school and has since used interpreters to access his education. When I met ██████████ in 4th grade, his signing skill was mainly nouns and his teachers would inquire further to gain information. His expression in ASL has grown tremendously in the last two years. He is now holding social conversations with other signers for more than 6 turns and is able to utilize an interpreter to chat with his hearing friends. At ██████████, we are so incredibly proud of his growth in language and academics.

As ██████████'s teacher, I know this experience will open his eyes to an entire world. He is one of two signers in the 5th grade and one of four in the whole school. His exposure to sign language comes from adults and what he watches on Tik Tok. I would love for him to get the opportunity to experience Deaf culture and be immersed in ASL with peers. I know this summer program will not only encourage linguistic growth but a confidence in himself as a young man. He needs to know there are others out there like him who have similar interests and who can express those interests directly.

After speaking with ██████████, she would like ██████████ to be considered for a full scholarship for the overnight experience at Camp Taloali. She knows this is a rich experience for him and he could gain some life long friendships, skills, and memories.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
██████████ - Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist  
on behalf of ██████████ ██████████ mother

The Oregon Community Summer Learning Grant enabled Camp Taloali to offer full camperships to any Oregon Deaf or Hard of Hearing child who wanted to attend summer camp with us. We were able to bring 81 Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind children and youth to Camp Taloali over three weeks in 2022. Camp Taloali has the capacity to more than double that with an earlier grant award which would give us sufficient time to recruit and hire specialized staff, and recruit and transport campers from all areas of the state. We are exceedingly grateful for the support the Oregon State Legislature provided over the last two years to Camp Taloali and know that continued funding will make a tremendous positive impact on this population, which is among the most marginalized groups in our state.

I can be reached at [janet.e.johanson@gmail.com](mailto:janet.e.johanson@gmail.com) or 503-400-6932 for any questions or clarifications.

Sincerely,

*Janet E. Johanson*

Janet Johanson, Retired,

Board of Directors, Camp Taloali

M.S. (degrees in Educational Administration, Deaf Education, Rehabilitation of the Deaf, Non-Profit Administration, and Outdoor Education and Recreation)