



Oregon Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

February 1, 2023

**SUBJECT: HB 2664 • Bill of Rights for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Foster Children with Child Welfare at Oregon Department of Human Services**

To the Chair Reynolds, Co-Vice-Chair Nguyen, Co-Vice Chair Scharf, and members of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services

Hello! This letter is intended to provide public education and increase awareness of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians. For so many years, this language and culturally marginalized group have been denied access to information, goods, and services in the State of Oregon. The final report in 2016 of the [Community-based Needs Assessment \(CNA\) of Oregon's Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) communities conducted by the Research & Resource Center on Deaf communities at Western Oregon University as this was funded by the 2015 Oregon Legislature, we were able to learn countless challenges and barriers. Despite the assessment's findings, legislators did not pass proposed legislation in 2017 that would have met critical community needs, prompting the establishment of Bridges Oregon.

Bridges Oregon, Inc. is a 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.

Some examples of data from the CNA report on Foster Children:

- "Oregon Child Welfare guidelines details multiethnic placement, but do not have a priority or policy for placing Deaf and hard of hearing children in signing or otherwise hearing-loss aware families, further stressing the child and creating an additional negative impact on the child's development." (page 7, CNA report).
- "Figure [19 and] 20 reflects how accessible consumers of state and country services perceived to them [survey respondents] to be...Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Services were seen as most accessible (92.0%; N=104). Least likely to be view as accessible was the Child Welfare office (42.9%; N=3). (page 49, CNA report).

There is a grave concern how the ODHS Child Welfare operates with the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing children:

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- Several years ago, a very young Deaf child was placed in a household that does not sign and they communicate through written white board, he stayed there for months before placing to a culturally appropriate household where his language acquisition thrive.
- DHS case workers often was assigned with Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing child/children and not knowing what to do, the case worker push panic button for information and resources which often time is not available to them. This happen nearly every time.
- For a long time the OregonKIDS system does not system in place to support the tracking of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing children.
- There is no leadership, oversight support, and centralized resources for the DHS case workers when it come with Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing foster children.
- We have Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) advocacy services where our only one advocate is working with over 75 survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and other general crimes. We have some adults on our case load who themselves grew up in the foster system and it left them life-long trauma from the impact by being in the system where the system is ill-prepared to work with them.
- Finally, there is an apparent no liaison between OregonDHS and culturally and linguistic specific and responsive nonprofit organization in need for cultural brokerage in working with the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing foster children.

I leave you a copy of brochure and position statement when it come with Foster Care system and the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing children.

I beseech you to recognize the need in implementing Bill of Rights for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Foster children as they are culturally specific and linguistically marginalized population in our state. Please vote yes to HB 2664.

Sincerely,

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