

Submitter: Thuman Merritt
On Behalf Of: myself
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure: HB2669

I wish to express support for HB 2669 that declares that children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind have the same rights and potential(s) as children without hearing loss.

With Oregon's newborn hearing screening program and subsequent retesting for hearing, it is critical that the Oregon legislature with passage of this bill declare that children with hearing loss have the same rights to a quality education focused on the unique needs of children with hearing loss including special educational services, coverage of hearing assistive devices, and teaching using American Sign Language when appropriate by a licensed audiologist, licensed speech and language pathologist, and licensed physician specializing in Ears, Nose, and Throat or Pediatrics as their sub-specialty. ASL training and usage with public education, permission to wear hearing assistive devices (hearing aids) should be permitted during educational experiences. American Sign Language training may occur using video courses provided through Western Oregon University or other accredited sources. As students in public schools may need to communicate with their parents, schools should be encouraged to have a telephone with Caption Calling installed at no expense in the school office or principal's office to facilitate student to parent, or parent to student communication. Respectfully submitted, Thurman Allen Merritt, M.D, Oregon Pediatrician, and member of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf/Blind Advisory Council of the Department of Health and Human Services. Physician license 19863, Home: Lebanon, Linn County, Oregon 97355. Thank you reading and considering my testimony. Thurman Allen Merritt, M.D.