



Oregon Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

February 5, 2024

To the Esteemed Chair, Vice Chair, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Greetings! This letter is crafted with the intent to foster understanding and raise awareness regarding the needs of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians within our state. Over the years, this culturally and linguistically diverse community has faced barriers in accessing essential information, goods, and services across Oregon.

Established in 2017, Bridges Oregon, Inc. stands as a statewide culturally and linguistically specific and responsive 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.

There is a critical need for the diversity, equity and inclusion framework to recognize and embrace the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing as a culturally and linguistically marginalized community. Numerous research will show that this community is often considered a cultural group. Deaf culture refers to the shared language, experiences, customs, and values of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. American Sign Language (ASL) is a central component of Deaf culture, as it provides a unique means of communication for many members of the community. Deaf culture also encompasses shared experiences related to being deaf in a predominantly hearing society, including challenges, identity, pride, and community bonding. It's important to recognize and respect Deaf culture as a distinct cultural group with its own language, traditions, and community norms.

We respectfully urge the Committee to advocate for a commitment from the authors and their peers to ensure the active inclusion of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing constituents in their endeavors.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we remain open to further discussions and collaboration on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chad A. Ludwig". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

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

cc: Oregon Association of the Deaf  
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