

H O L S T

JOINT COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
900 COURT ST. NE
SALEM, OREGON
97301

MARCH 18, 2025

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for securing funding for the Oregon School for the Deaf Long-Term Facilities Plan via SB 5505/5506. As a Deaf individual and a designer at Holst Architecture, I urge you to advocate for this issue.

Deaf schools are like Harry Potter's Hogwarts in the way the environment feels – Deaf students learn not only academics and extracurricular activities but also about Deaf culture, American Sign Language, Deaf history and what it means to take pride in our Deaf identity. I attended the California School for the Deaf in Fremont, California during high school. The campus is huge, attractive, and designed with functionality in mind. Students have numerous opportunities to explore their passions and develop skills. This school launched me into my architecture career.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit the Oregon School for the Deaf, and I was profoundly hurt by what I witnessed. The aging architecture and the poorly designed, inadequate, inaccessible spaces were heartbreaking. Many of the existing buildings are outdated structures that were originally designed without the needs of Deaf students in mind. The random placement of rooms and buildings create significant functional challenges. Some classrooms are open, which does not provide enough space for privacy or a quiet space for sensory-sensitive students. Dormitory hallways and rooms feel very institutional, which make them unwelcoming and unfamiliar and far from a comfortable, home-like environment.

I would like to extend an invitation to you to visit the Oregon School for the Deaf, so you can experience firsthand what I saw. I believe that walking through the Deaf school will open your heart, open your mind, and open your eyes to the importance of creating a Deaf-friendly environment. This school has a unique spirit and history, and I am confident that after your visit, you will understand why it is essential for these buildings and the surrounding landscape to be designed with the needs of Deaf individuals in mind.

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With this invitation, I hope you will understand why I am asking funding to enhance both the interior and exterior of the buildings and to create a beautifully designed, Deaf-friendly campus. By incorporating the principles of Deafspace and Deafscape, we can ensure these spaces truly serve their purpose in a more meaningful way and inclusive way.

This investment would not only improve the Oregon School for the Deaf but also create a lasting impact for future generations. I am confident that the next Deaf student generation would take great pride in having a unique and thoughtfully designed school in Oregon.

I strongly urge you to consider funding new construction and renovations to create better, more accessible spaces for the Deaf school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Monserrat Vazquez Fonseca', written in a cursive style.

MONSERRAT VAZQUEZ FONSECA, DESIGNER
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