



April 9, 2025

Oregon State Legislature  
Senate Committee on Rules  
900 Court St NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 602 with Proposed Amendments

Chair Sen. Kayse Jama, Vice-Chair Sen. Daniel Bonham, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Bridges Oregon, a unique statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to serving Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians in their heritage language. Our mission is to ensure that these communities have equitable access to essential services, resources, and opportunities—free from systemic barriers.

We strongly support Senate Bill 602, which represents an important step in modernizing the grant and contracting processes between the State of Oregon and nonprofit organizations. As a nonprofit that works closely with state and local agencies, we recognize the pressing need for reform that promotes financial sustainability, streamlined operations, and inclusive service delivery.

However, while we commend the intent of SB 602, we believe the bill currently lacks specific accountability measures to ensure accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

In our own work, we have repeatedly encountered barriers when collaborating with other nonprofits—including the Nonprofit Association of Oregon—due to the absence of basic accommodations, such as qualified American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters. These shortcomings restrict access to vital services and information for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals.

#### Proposed Amendments

To address this critical gap, we respectfully propose the following amendment language to be inserted into the bill—specifically under Section 3, as a new subsection following 3(f), to be designated as 3(g):

- (g) A nonprofit organization that receives a grant or enters into a public contract with a state agency shall:
- Demonstrate that its annual operational budget includes a designated allocation for accessibility and accommodations for individuals with disabilities;



- Proactively provide reasonable accommodations, including but not limited to American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, captioning, and tactile interpreting services, upon request; and
- Comply with all applicable accessibility laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS), and Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR).

Oregon's nonprofits play a crucial role in delivering culturally responsive and community-based services. However, their readiness and commitment to accessibility vary greatly. Incorporating clear and enforceable accountability standards into SB 602 will help create a more equitable and inclusive environment for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you further about these proposed amendments and work collaboratively to strengthen SB 602 for all communities.

Sincerely,

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