



## SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 18, 2025

**Press Contact:**

Elizabeth Cronen, Elizabeth.Cronen@oregonlegislature.gov

### **Senate Moves to Support American Sign Language Access in Public Services**

*Fair pay for public workers using ASL on the job expands access*

**SALEM, OR** – Today the Oregon Senate voted to require that public employees proficient in American Sign Language get the same pay raise they would if they used any other language skills on the job. The policy recognizes ASL as a language and will increase the number of ASL interpreters available to Deaf Oregonians when accessing public services.

“American Sign Language is too often overlooked in initiatives that promote language access,” said **Senator Sara Gelser Blouin, Chair of the Senate Human Services Committee (D - Corvallis)**. “Recognizing individuals fluent in ASL with the same pay incentives offered to those who are fluent in multiple spoken languages will make our parks, libraries, and schools more accessible to thousands of Oregonians.”

Senator Gelser Blouin is chief sponsor of the bill.

“This legislation helps break down barriers in public services, ensuring that Deaf and Hard of Hearing Oregonians can interact more effectively with government agencies, educators, and first responders,” said Chad Ludwig, founder executive director of Bridges Oregon. “We applaud the Oregon Legislature for taking this important step toward a more inclusive future.”

Nearly 200,000 Oregonians are Deaf or have serious difficulty hearing, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

“Language access is a human right,” said Gelser Blouin. “Recognizing that right with the passage of SB 731 moves Oregon closer to the vision of equitable access to public life for all Oregonians with disabilities.”

The bill, SB 731, now heads to the Oregon House of Representatives for consideration.

###