



Amendments Proposal for HB325

The Utah Association of the Deaf (UAD), which represents deaf, hard-of-hearing, and deaf-blind people throughout the state, has been aggressively working to prevent HB325S01. UAD believes this bill will negatively impact the quality and access of services for people with disabilities.

As you may know, HB325 proposes to reposition the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation Services (USOR) under the Department of Workforce Services (DWS), penalizing and disenfranchising (yet again) the already over-marginalized population of Deaf and hard-of-hearing citizens in Utah. Due to past experiences with DWS services, many people with disabilities feel that they will be underserved again.

The Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DSDHH) has been historically placed under the auspices of USOR. The Sanderson Community Center is just that: — *the only* — gathering place for deaf and hard-of-hearing Utah citizens. The Sanderson Center also provides a wide range of services and programs to enhance the quality of life for deaf and hard-of-hearing people; the Center is a place where barriers — linguistic, political, social, and financial — are removed for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing people of this state. *More importantly, the Sanderson Center provides services to this population that the at-large professional and rehabilitative communities historically cannot and often will not provide.* When the access is removed or severely curtailed to these services, this sends a punitive message of apathy and disenfranchisement to Utah's Deaf and hard-of-hearing constituents.

We and many other organizations representing people with disabilities have repeatedly requested to hold off on this bill for at least one year to further studying can be done to determine the best feasible positioning of USOR, DSDHH and other similar divisions. ***As of now, the committees vote to proceed with the move of USOR and all its divisions (including DSDSHH) to DWS, against constituents' wishes and needs. Change is taking place in spite of unanimous concerns about the quality of customer service.***

We would like to ask YOU as senators and representatives who represent us, the Utah constituents, to make these amendments to the HB325 if this cannot be tabled.

First amendment - we want to propose adding **53A-24-403** (around line 404 or line 420) about recognizing and defining positions, such as an assistant or deputy director, who has intimate knowledge of the needs of that specific community and its programs, services, language, and culture. Originally there WERE provisions written specifically for the directors of DSBVI and DSDHH with this context but these have been removed from this bill. Adding this amendment will help ensure that citizens' needs are not lost, buried, or otherwise additionally marginalized in the state system and yet still allow for a voice to express our needs if moved under DWS.

53A-24-403. Appointment of administrator for the division.

- (1) The executive director shall appoint an administrator for DSDHH with the approval of the board.
- (2) The administrator of DSDHH shall administer the division in accordance with the direction of the executive director, board policies, and applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

Second amendment— Line 719 and 755 —We would like to amend this and change the percentage of the advisory council members with specific disabilities (Blind/visually impaired for DSBVI, Deaf/hard of hearing for DSDHH) from 1/3 to 51% on their councils. This will help the councils have better representation of their population.

Third amendment— Interpreters Certification Board – Line 795, 799, 801, 802, 805, 814, 816 – We'd like to have the authority to appoint qualified people to the Interpreters Certification Board be added back to Services to the Deaf and

Hard of Hearing. (Historically, DSDHH had this authority but with this bill, that authority has been reassigned to DWS and/or USOR).

Fourth amendment– Line 1868-1871 – We would like to add language to the “Intend” section in order to protect the services, programs and access to services provided by DSDHH so no matter what, DWS and USOR cannot cut back or reduce these.

We, people with disabilities are starting to feel that public input is not taken seriously by our legislators. Change is taking place in spite of unanimous concerns about the quality of customer service and access to services.

Questions to ask yourself as legislators –

- **Why are the governor and governor’s office rushing to move this against constituents’ wishes and needs?**
- **Why aren’t they listening to the constituents?**
- **Why are they really pushing to move this under DWS?**

To view videos about these concerns and clips of the most recent legislative meeting, please go to either www.uad.org/leg or our Facebook page – type in Utah Association of the Deaf – UAD and you will see various videos posted. All videos are captioned.