**Michael Pimentel – Panel Answers**

**Subject:** **Questions for the Panelists**

﻿Here are the answers to the questions for the panelists:

Panelist Introductions (Organization, Your Name, and Title):

Global Technical Communications, Benjamin Soukup, CEO and Michael Pimentel, Vice President of Technology.

1. What is the most significant challenge facing the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community at the moment from your organization's perspective?

Navigating the digital world poses the most substantial challenge. Common barriers include media needing more captions, audio without transcripts, a shortage of sign language interpretation, and non-inclusive social platforms.

     2. What legislative issues are currently affecting the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community, and what changes do you see as necessary?

Issues surrounding interpreting services and community services/advocacy for the deaf and hard of hearing are prevalent. In rural Nevada, the limited pool of interpreters is exacerbated in small cities, with medical clinics often refusing to provide necessary services. This leaves the community unsure where to seek help or file a complaint.

a. What are the most critical changes we must implement to address future challenges effectively?

Legislators must actively participate in effecting changes that enhance communication accessibility and services for the deaf and hard of hearing.

     3. What are common obstacles preventing individuals from advocating for themselves or their community?

Oppression and communication barriers are primary challenges. Affording interpreters for meetings can be prohibitive, especially as English may not be the individual's first language, with American Sign Language being their native language. Written communication is time-consuming, and misunderstanding from the hearing community further compounds the issue.

a. What is one piece of practical advice you would offer to someone starting out as an advocate?

Advocates must be assertive and persistent in conveying their message. Honesty, straightforwardness, and realism are crucial when engaging with legislators and their staff.

     4. How can we actively involve the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community in planning for legislative changes?

Encouraging assertiveness among the deaf and hard of hearing is key. Utilize their stories and experiences to speak to the public about the significance of your organization and the positive impact it has made in their lives.