

## HB 2231 Testimony

Chair Taylor, Vice-chair Knopp, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Teresa Alonso Leon, and I'm the State Representative for House District 22 which incorporates Woodburn, through the North part of Salem. The bill before you today is about giving opportunity to health care interpreters around the state to organize themselves and increase the quality of services.

As you may have seen on OLIS, there have been several anonymous testimonies submitted by hard working interpreters that are afraid of retaliation or of being blacklisted by their companies. The fact that this is happening speaks to the toxic work culture in the interpretation industry.

Interpreters in general play a vital role in our state, they interpret in our court systems, in community meetings and many times they are interpreting in life or death situations. At the same time, our interpreters are also navigating issues of inconsistent scheduling, lack of communication about appointments and unclear policies around their wages. At times interpreters are asked to do more work than is expected with the same amount of pay. In some instances, they show up for an appointment that is canceled last minute, which leads to inconsistent wages. We have also seen companies purposefully recruit non-certified interpreters in order to pay them less, which has left certified interpreters with a lack of hours. All these issues affect our communities and the quality of service they have access to.

HB 2231 will help to professionalize the industry by advocating for transparency of provided services. We need clear terms of employment for interpreters, consistent contracts and strong communication structures so that they are well prepared to provide the necessary services to Oregonians.

Through collective bargaining, they hope to raise industry standards and advocate for accountability of all the stakeholders. In addition to that, this will help interpreters negotiate for fair pay and scheduling. HB 2231 will also serve to raise awareness of best practices in the industry and ensure we are following existing law. And finally, we hope to continue to uplift the importance of the profession and the right to language access for all Oregonians who need it.

Of course, not all interpreters are health care interpreters, but all health care interpreters are interpreters and this bill aims to begin acknowledging industry standards here in Oregon.

If you have any questions, Lamar Wise, an AFSCME political coordinator, will be able to address them. I ask that you all pass HB 2231 with a do pass recommendation and send it to the Senate floor. Again, thank you for your time, and to the interpreters in the room; thank you for all that you do for Oregon.

Thank you.