

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2359

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House Committee on Health Care

John D. Curtis

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Good afternoon Chair Prusak, Vice Chairs Hayden and Salinas, and members of the committee. My name is John Curtis. I am a severely disabled senior living in southern Oregon.

For the past three years a collaborative group has been working to improve effective communication in healthcare settings for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Advocates, Agencies, CCOs and providers are working together to educate the larger healthcare community and consumers how improvements and best practice can occur. The group has primarily focused on providers and their duty to communicate with the Deaf as well as they do with the hearing and health literate. At the same time the Deaf are learning their rights, how to bridge communication barriers and effect change.

ASL Interpreters are integral for communication with those using signed language, especially in healthcare settings. But for that communication to be effective ASL interpreters must not only know medical terminology, they must be highly skilled to communicate what the provider says in signed language that the patient understands. The mechanism to become a certified or qualified medical ASL interpreter has been in need of repair for quite some time. HB 2359 is a sensible way to assure providers and patients alike of more effective communication

However, certified and qualified medical ASL interpreters are in short supply in parts of our state and cannot be found in much of it. I believe HB 2359 recognizes this in its "to the greatest extent practicable" carve out. My hope is that this is the case when the law moves into rule.

I ask that you support HB 2359 and schedule it for a work session at your earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,
John D. Curtis