

Rep. Rachel Prusak, Chair
House Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

April 6, 2021

SUBJECT: Support for HB3231, the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Bill

To the Chair Prusak, Vice-Chair Hayden, Vice-Chair Salinas, and members of the Committee:

I'm writing in support of HB3231. I strongly believe this bill is vital for protecting the rights of all Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deafblind citizens in Oregon. In my fifteen years as a sign language interpreter and throughout my various roles as an agency coordinator, interpreter educator, and a board member of the national certifying body, I have witnessed countless non-fluent signers perform the function of an interpreter, always to the detriment of the Deaf consumers. Non-qualified 'interpreters' can irrevocably damage a Deaf child's ability to succeed in school, causing long lasting impact. Non-qualified signers are currently working in medical, mental health, and correctional settings, impeding Deaf people's rights and causing harm.

This bill establishes a licensure for sign language interpreters, ensuring that those individuals who work as an interpreter are qualified to do so. With a licensure requirement, hiring entities can confidently hire a licensed interpreter, knowing that they are satisfying the legal mandates set out by federal and state laws. This protects the Deaf consumers' rights and protects hiring entities from legal ramifications.

Over 30 states across the United States require certification or licensure to work as a sign language interpreter. Unfortunately, Oregon has few standards for interpreters and those standards are too frequently unenforced. At this time, anyone can work as a sign language interpreter, even if they are not fluent American Sign Language. This results in unqualified or unethical interpreting services, violating the rights of Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians. This bill will change that.

I respectfully urge you to support HB3231.

Sincerely,



Mish Ktejik, MA, NIC, SC:L