

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

April 6, 2021

RE: Support the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Bill

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

My name is Tammy Adams. I am a Nationally Certified ASL/English interpreter. I am writing to urge the Committee's support of HB3231.

This Bill protects the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities by establishing a licensure requirement for Sign Language interpreters. Currently in Oregon, anyone can legally represent themselves as a Sign Language interpreter whether or not they are qualified and provide services in settings such as emergency press-conferences, drug treatment facilities, or attorney-client meetings. This results in unqualified or unethical interpreting services, violating the rights of Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians and potentially causing great harm to consumers. Along with the risk to the consumers, hiring entities such as government agencies are at risk of lawsuits if they hire interpreters who are unqualified. Licensure will establish standards for the profession, as well as protect consumers and hiring entities by requiring licensure to work as a Sign Language interpreter in Oregon. Over 30 states have established such requirements for Sign Language interpreters and the passing of this bill would ensure Oregon is in line with national best practices.

In my over 25 years of experience I have seen the k12 system be a training ground for interpreters. They come with barely any skills, stay long enough to gain some skills and then leave to freelance. This has long lasting deleterious effects on children who are already language deprived. The OARs provide standards for the hiring of K12 interpreters, however many districts avoid this by changing job titles and hiring unqualified people to perform the work a qualified interpreter should be doing. I have seen people fail out of interpreting programs and then go out and work as interpreters and I have seen interpreters who do not hold national certification interpreting medical and legal appointments. These things will continue happening until Oregon joins the other 30 states who currently have registration and licensure requirements.

I respectfully ask you to support the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Bill because this law will protect the rights of Oregon's Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing citizens.

Sincerely,
Tammy Adams