

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:

My name is Julie Reis, I am a Deaf Interpreter (DI) and a consumer who uses hearing ASL interpreters. I am writing to urge the Committee's support of HB3231.

This bill will protect the more than 180,000 Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians in our state 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, emergency medical situations or attorney-client meetings. This results in unqualified or unethical interpreting services, violating the rights of our Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing Oregonians and potentially causing great harm to consumers. Along with the risk to the consumers, hiring entities including government agencies are at risk of lawsuits if they hire interpreters who are unqualified.

HB3231 will create a State Board of Sign Language Interpreters within Oregon Health Authority, outline requirements for interpreter licensure, establish standards for the profession and by doing this 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.

I have experienced having unqualified interpreters coming to my doctor appointments and dealing with my dad's hospice. They were horrible experiences which caused emotional disturbance. I had to clarify what I wanted to say. In my experience with my dad's hospice, the nurse almost made a mistake giving my dad medicine because of incorrect interpretation from the interpreter. It scared me and it is very important to have a qualified interpreter. I believe having a licensure protocol would have prevented those situations.

I respectfully ask for the Committee's support of HB3231 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julie Reis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a stylized "R".

Julie Reis  
250 Kimeron St SE  
Salem, OR 97306