

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 Elizabeth Delumeau, I am a teacher of the Deaf and a Deaf parent of a Deaf child. 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.

It has occurred many times in the past that "bad actors" have scammed people in positions of authority and these people did not do their due diligence on their credentials. The fake sign language interpreter for a Nelson Mandela memorial in 2013 made global headlines. Tampa police let a random woman interpret at a press conference regarding a serial killing and the family that relied on the interpreting didn't need that extra trauma in addition to their loss. There must be a standard for interpreting in our community and this bill WILL meet that need. Not everyone will know ASL and what to look for in a qualified ASL interpreter. Not everyone is educated or without a bias about the Deaf community or Sign Language, so I can tell you without a shadow of doubt that this also hurts our mental health and creates a strong need for disability justice.

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 like my peers, my friends, my students, my daughter and myself.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Delumeau
Salem, OR