

Rep. Rob Nosse
House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

January 27, 2023

SUBJECT: Support for HB 2696, the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Bill

To the Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair Goodwin, Vice-Chair Nelson, and members of the Committee:

I am writing to urge this Committee to support HB 2696.

I'm writing in support of HB 2696. I strongly believe this bill is necessary 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.

I have worked as a professional interpreter in nine states. One of these states required a license to work as an interpreter. I can attest that a licensure system for interpreters is successful. A licensure system protects consumers and providers, and also raises awareness about the profession resulting in an increased number of qualified working interpreters.

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 in 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 HB2696.

Sincerely,



Mish Ktejik, MA, NIC, SC:L, OCHI
National Interpreter Certification
Specialty Certification: Legal
Oregon Certified Healthcare Interpreter (OCHI)