

February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023

Rep. Rob Nosse  
House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Bill

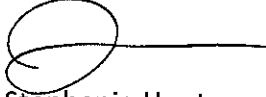
Dear Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair Goodwin, Vice-Chair Nelson, and members of the Committee:

My name is Stephanie Hunter and I am a parent of a young person that is Hard of Hearing. I am writing to urge the Committee to support HB 2696. I am also a behavioral consultant that has lived and worked in Central Oregon for almost 8 years and prior to that lived in Multnomah County and consulted all along the I-5 corridor. I have witnessed the overall disparities in resources and the impact this has on vulnerable populations in rural communities. The services my daughter could access for hearing services dropped dramatically when we moved to this area. My daughter and our family are still learning sign language as she may continue to lose hearing over time. I would like to ensure that the Oregonians that desperately need licensed Sign Language Interpreters have access to individuals that are not misrepresenting their skills or certifications and causing harm. I want to use my voice to protect my daughter from a possible future when she may rely on licensed interpreters.

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.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Stephanie Hunter  
351 SW 23<sup>rd</sup> St.  
Redmond, OR 97756