

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.

My name is Cindy Holmes and I am a Sign Language interpreter entity who resides in your district.

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 care about the community with whom I work. Though there is a national certification available, not all interpreters have this certification and the organization has little/no authority to regulate those outside of the organization. This means some individuals are doing interpreting without the oversight of an authoritative body. As a result, some users of American Sign Language are struggling to receive adequate access even when a sign language interpreter is provided. Licensure and standardization could help remedy this.

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,

Cynthia A Holmes
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