

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 Sarah Comerford and I am writing on behalf of the Oregon Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (ORID) as current President. As an organization which advocates with sign language interpreters in solidarity with the Deaf community in the State of Oregon, we assert our favor of HB 2696 and urge you to support this bill.

The passage of this bill will ensure that the Deaf community, a linguistic minority, receives the highest quality of interpreting services possible by requiring interpreters in the state to hold a legally recognized license and be vetted properly and with consistency. Too often, unqualified and unethical individuals who call themselves interpreters are hired in situations where a Deaf/Hard of Hearing/DeafBlind Oregonian requires access. There is currently nothing preventing these uncredentialed, unqualified individuals from labeling themselves and working as interpreters. The lack of regulation, quite frankly, puts the lives and livelihoods of Oregonians at stake who rely on qualified interpreters to provide access in situations ranging from kindergarten classes to medical procedures to court proceedings.

HB 2696 will create a state Board of Sign Language Interpreters within Oregon Health Authority, delineate requirements for interpreter licensure and establish standards for the profession. Over 30 states in the US have established such requirements and the passing of this bill would ensure that Oregon becomes in line with the nationally trending standards of the profession.

The Oregon Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf supports HB 2696, and for the benefit of the over 180,000 Deaf/Hard of Hearing/DeafBlind Oregonians, we urge the Committee to support this bill too.

Sincerely,

Sarah Comerford, ORID President
Jordan Kenny, ORID Vice President
Mish Ktejik, ORID Treasurer
Jennifer Miller, ORID Secretary
Sarah Armstrong, ORID Member-at-Large #1
Andrew Weaver, ORID Member-at-Large #2