

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 am myself an deaf person since I have been an infant. I have scant memories of hearing sounds in my ears. I have imagined some sounds and felt some in my ears. Yet that is all I can describe knowing what a sound is like by learned experiences that I learned after becoming deaf. So I consider myself nearly born deaf even though I became sick and lost my hearing.

Having qualified interpreters is a great thing. I have experienced interpreters know how to sign and interpreters that know ASL. Can be a big difference.

While I have the attention of you, the lawmaker. I want to say that it's vital especially in some situations where a real face to face person as a interpreter is required. Now there seems to be a reliance on technology in hospitals and such. Those sometimes are not ideal and choice hopefully can be given to the public to get a live-person interpreter. It may not be applicable to this bill upcoming. In any case it's an opportunity for me to point this out.

Having a good interpreter is vital in education, pre-k, k 1-12. If a interpreter is not qualified in ASL then, the learner suffers. Because sometimes the interpreter becomes the teacher, the parent, and takes upon on a bigger role than intended in a setting where there is no other signers as qualified to be a role model. The interpreter can be relied on for advice, where to learn more about signing, and knowledge about the deaf community. We expect out ASL interpreters to be culturally knowledgeable in addition to being able to sign in ASL or a variety of modes as the client needs.

In a job setting, an employer might want to get away with not hiring a qualified interpreter. In group settings such as a meeting. Not only just profound deaf people can struggle. Hard of hearing people do too. Starting a new job is a huge thing especially when it's a new thing to a young person. I think interpreters need to be provided more often in job settings. WE have the VRS service. Schools, Colleges now provide interpreters for classes. Yet in the workplace it varies by employer. I have friends that quit good jobs because they struggled with team meetings. Sometimes it's enough to have a interpreter for the first few weeks of work. Sometimes it's only needed for

meetings. Having a qualified interpreter is important.

I have mostly talked about places where interpreters are lacking and needed. Not about how the interpreter should be "qualified" I am not familiar with the law of the process of qualifying a interpreter. I do know that the industry suffers in different areas. There are not enough volunteers. It's not possible for a beginning learner to volunteer or a low-risk situation. They're too scared of not being qualified. It should be the deaf person's choice of who they want to interpret regardless of what kind of qualifications. IF they are "old enough to know what is qualified and not" (not the same as a young k1-12 student) So, Yet in some jobs the not qualified interpreters are getting by and working. This is another problem. The choice needs to be on the client if the client is okay with the person interpreting then qualifications can be waived and should be done due to the clients wishes. Some situations are taken advantage of not following the client's choice. I think this should be included.

Thanks for your time reading.

Zachary Wertz