

**TESTIMONY ON HB 2696
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE
FEBRUARY 6, 2023**

**PRESENTED BY: TIM LEWIS, SENIOR ASSISTANT GENERAL COUNSEL
OREGON JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT**

Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Tim Lewis with the Office of General Counsel for the Oregon Judicial Department (OJD). On behalf of Chief Justice Meagan Flynn and OJD, I am pleased to express support of HB 2696 as introduced.

HB 2696 creates a licensure program for sign language interpreters. We recognize and support the proponents' goal of ensuring that Oregonians are receiving high-quality interpretation services from credentialed interpreters who are trained to meet community needs in several settings. Excellence in interpretation serves Oregon's Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities, as well as our state.

Under ORS 45.291, OJD's Court Language Access Services (CLAS) program currently meets that goal by certifying Oregon Certified Court Interpreters, including American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters. OJD offers this unique program to meet the dynamic needs of Oregon's state courts and the diverse individuals we serve. Competence in interpretation, paired with flexibility to engage in services, is tremendously important to allow courts to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, other federal and state statutes, and constitutional requirements. We are very grateful to the proponents of this bill for working with OJD to ensure that this new licensure program and OJD's ASL interpreter program can exist side by side.

We appreciate Speaker Rayfield, Senator Anderson, Senator Sollman, and the community leaders who brought this bill forward. I am happy to answer any questions.