

Date: 2/28/2023

For: Senate Rules Committee

From: Octaviano Merecias Cuevas (Member of the Mixtec Community in Oregon)

RE: Support for SB 612 y SB 911

Chair Lieber, Vice-Chair Knopp, and members of the committee,

I am writing to express my concern about the lack of recognition of the fundamental human right of being able to understand and be understood in Oregon. Indigenous language interpreters, who possess unique and highly valuable skills, are not being paid adequately for their services, and face unnecessary barriers to credentialing. This limits interpretation services for Indigenous communities and leads to devastating inequality for Oregonians who speak an indigenous language.

Without adequate access to interpretation, Oregonians who speak Indigenous languages face tremendous barriers to participating in society. This includes delay or denial of life-saving medical care, inaccessibility of critical services such as safety, public benefits, and social programs, wrongful imprisonment, and unjust deportation and family separation.

I urge you to take immediate action to address these issues. The ability to understand and be understood is a fundamental human right and it is time that we recognize the unique and valuable skills of Indigenous language interpreters and provide them with the compensation and recognition they deserve. Furthermore, removing barriers to credentialing will increase access to interpretation services for Indigenous communities, allowing them to participate in society more fully and reducing human rights violations.

In conclusion, I implore you to take the necessary steps to ensure that the fundamental human right of understanding and being understood is recognized in Oregon. Investing in Indigenous language interpreters will not only make our systems stronger for all, but it will also help heal generations of harm.

Respectfully;

Octaviano Merecias-Cuevas

Member of the Mixtec Community in Oregon