

February 27, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Rules
From: Amy Franco, Pueblo Unido PDX

Dear Legislators,

Over 35,000 Oregonians speak an Indigenous language from Mexico, Central America, or South America as their primary language. This preservation of language contributes to the vitality of the region and strengthens ties to a legacy of Indigenous culture and heritage that should be celebrated. Unfortunately these cultural benefits and persistence currently come at a dire cost, as the lack of Indigenous interpretation services too often leads to Indigenous Oregonians being denied life-saving care, access to critical services, or suffering imprisonment and deportation.

SB 612 will result in thoughtful and culturally-appropriate development of language proficiency evaluation mechanisms for Indigenous languages that will allow interpreters to demonstrate their language skills and obtain formal credentialing. The bill will also ensure that Indigenous interpreters are paid a living wage and prevent Indigenous Oregonians from being forced to pay for their own interpretation through a potentially unreliable or unqualified interpreter.

SB 911 will establish a commission for Original Peoples from South America, Central America, and Mexico within the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office, ensuring that the voices of Indigenous communities are represented in state government and have a direct voice in policy proposals that concern Indigenous Oregonians.

With this legislation, Oregon has a chance to become a state that recognizes and adequately resources Indigenous language justice efforts. My life as a Pueblo Unido PDX board member, Panamanian, and Oregonian has been richer as a result of closer collaboration and learning with Indigenous community members and I am committed to ensuring that language justice becomes a reality.

I urge you to support these bills and to help lead the way to bright futures for all.

Amy Franco
Board Treasurer
Pueblo Unido PDX