

Submitter: Meaghan Vehlies  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB950

My name is Meaghan Vehlies and I am a Sign Language interpreter residing and working in Oregon.

I'm writing to ask you to support SB950. This bill clarifies and streamlines the licensure law that was created during the 2023 session for sign language interpreters in Oregon. The rule-making process has highlighted areas where the statute created redundancies and confusion, and others that left critical gaps, such as an on-ramping process for new interpreters entering the field. The goal of licensure is to protect the rights of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians, but as written it is derailing that goal and causing harm. The amendments put forth in SB 950 will get us back on track.

Unfortunately there is a nationwide interpreter shortage and Oregon is not immune to that. Everyday Deaf folks go without critical communication services- for doctors appointments, schooling, trainings, and anything else you can think of. And now because of the confusing legislation that was passed in 2023, more folks are leaving the field or refusing to cross state lines to work here. At the end of the day, while this has been a headache for interpreters, it is Deaf people who continue to be disproportionately impacted by the lack of clarity and guidance in this legislation.

I respectfully ask you to support the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Amendment Bill (SB 950) to save time, money, and confusion for the state and for interpreters to improve our ability to protect and serve the rights of Oregon's Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing citizens.