



March 13, 2025

Chair Sen. Deb Patterson, Vice-Chair Sen. Cedric Hayden, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Chad A. Ludwig, and I am the Founder and Executive Director of Bridges Oregon, Inc. I am writing today in support of Senate Bill 950, which seeks to refine and improve the licensing framework for sign language interpreters in Oregon. This bill addresses necessary adjustments to HB 2696 (2023) by allowing the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters to establish criteria for supervisory licensure and licensure by endorsement. Furthermore, SB 950 streamlines the licensing process by eliminating specialty licenses that create administrative redundancies and unnecessary barriers to interpreter entry.

Bridges Oregon, Inc. is a statewide nonprofit dedicated to advocating for and serving the Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, and hearing loss communities in Oregon, using their heritage language. As a linguistically and culturally specific organization, we provide a unique range of direct and social human services, including advocacy, case management, employment support, independent living assistance, Co-Navigator services for our DeafBlind constituents, and sign language assessment. Additionally, as the only Deaf-led nonprofit sign language interpreting provider in Oregon, A5 Interpreting, we have firsthand insight into the challenges faced by interpreters and the community members who rely on their services.

While we strongly support the intent of HB 2696, we have identified areas where improvements are necessary to ensure smoother implementation and greater accessibility to qualified interpreters. SB 950 makes critical changes by:

1. Creating a Sign Language Interpreter-in-Training License

- This allows aspiring interpreters to enter the field while receiving supervised training, ensuring a sustainable pipeline of interpreters to meet Oregon's needs.
- This is particularly crucial given the severe shortage of Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs) in Oregon. As of now, only five CDIs are actively working statewide, making it nearly impossible to meet the demand, especially in medical and legal settings.

2. Removing Barriers Created by Specialty Licenses

- HB 2696 initially required separate specialty licenses for educational, medical, and legal interpreting.
- These restrictions inadvertently created confusion, increased licensing costs, and restricted access to interpreters in critical settings.

1115 Madison St NE, #1069 • Salem, OR 97301  
(971) 202-1500 • [info@bridgesoregon.org](mailto:info@bridgesoregon.org) • [BridgesOregon.org](http://BridgesOregon.org)



- SB 950 removes these specialty licenses, aligning Oregon's policies with national best practices while still ensuring interpreter qualifications and oversight through the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters.

### 3. Clarifying Exemptions & Temporary Licensure

- SB 950 allows for temporary interpreting in emergencies or when licensed interpreters are not available (e.g., in rural areas).
- It also streamlines the process for out-of-state interpreters to obtain licensure in Oregon if their qualifications meet the board's standards.
- This is particularly beneficial for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals who struggle to access interpreters in healthcare, legal, and rural settings.

### 4. Ensuring Licensing Fees Are Reasonable & Justified

- Oregon currently has one of the highest interpreter licensing fees in the nation, significantly higher than most other states.
- High costs discourage interpreters from seeking licensure in Oregon, worsening the statewide interpreter shortage.
- SB 950 directs the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters to review and establish fees based on national averages and actual program costs, ensuring fairness and sustainability.

Bridges Oregon strongly urges the committee to pass Senate Bill 950 to address these critical gaps and ensure a more effective and inclusive interpreter licensure process. By enacting these changes, Oregon will:

- Strengthen the interpreter workforce to meet the communication needs of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities.
- Reduce unnecessary administrative and financial barriers that limit interpreter availability.
- Ensure that licensing requirements remain rigorous while also being practical and accessible.

Thank you for considering this testimony. I am available to answer any questions or provide additional information to support your deliberations on SB 950.

Sincerely,

Chad A. Ludwig, MSW, ADAC, CDI  
Founder and Executive Director  
Bridges Oregon, Inc.