

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 2976  
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
EARLY CHILDHOOD AND HUMAN SERVICES  
MARCH 18, 2025**

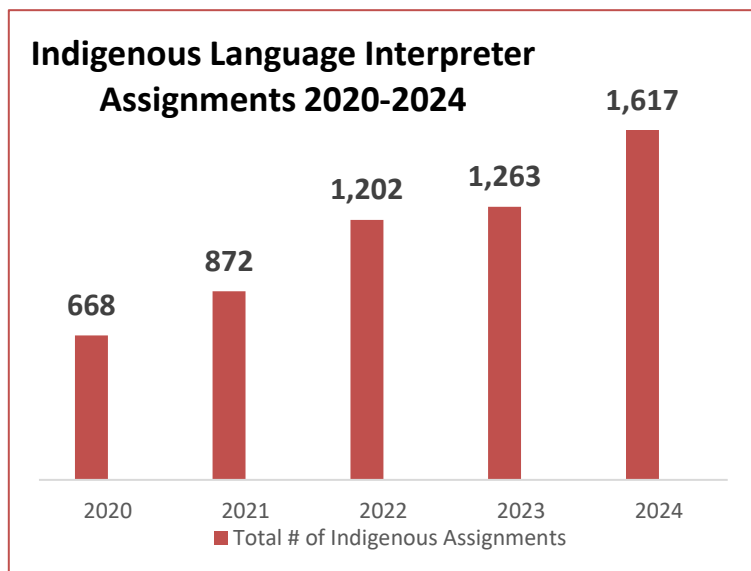
**PRESENTED BY: KIMBERLY MCCULLOUGH,  
SENIOR COUNSEL FOR GOVERNMENT RELATIONS  
OREGON JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT**

Chair Hartman, Vice-Chairs Nguyen and Scharf, and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Judicial Department (OJD) supports HB 2976, which would appropriate funding to facilitate the creation of additional language proficiency evaluations for interpretation of Indigenous languages and to help recruit, train, and support retention of Indigenous language interpreters.

In recent years, OJD has seen an increase in demand for Indigenous language interpreters. As reflected in the chart below, from 2020 to 2024 the number of Indigenous language interpreter assignments have increased by an average of 25.37% each year. Mam, an Indigenous language from Guatemala, is in the top 10 of interpreter requested languages for OJD.

Due to the high demand, OJD has been challenged to find qualified Indigenous language interpreters to work in the courts. Unlike other languages, such as Spanish, there are no currently available state or national certification or language proficiency evaluation mechanisms for Indigenous language interpreters. OJD relies on the interpreter’s self-attestation regarding education, training, and experience or on interpreter agencies that have their own vetting processes.



Oregon’s policy is to “secure the constitutional rights and other rights of persons who are unable to readily understand or communicate in the English language because of a non-English-speaking cultural background or a disability, and who as a result cannot be fully protected in administrative and court proceedings unless qualified interpreters are available to provide assistance.” ORS 45.273. By statute, the State Court Administrator must establish “a program for the certification of court interpreters” as well as “minimum competency requirements for court interpreters.” ORS 45.291.

One of OJD’s [2024-2027 Justice Campaign](#) Commitments is to “collaborate with community partners to improve services and access for people who are underserved, vulnerable, and marginalized.” HB 2976 aligns with this commitment, as language proficiency evaluation mechanisms for Indigenous language interpreters would provide OJD access to a pool of Indigenous interpreters to pull from to qualify for court interpreting and to serve court customers.