

Submitter: Edy Benjamin Lopez Castillo
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2976

Chair Hartman, Vice-Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chair Scharf, and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Edy Benjamin Lopez Castillo and I am an interpreter for the Mayan language Jakalteko/Popti' and Spanish. I am a member of the Collective of Indigenous Interpreters of Oregon, convened by Pueblo Unido.

All Oregonians should have access to quality interpretation services when they need them. But there remain significant barriers to achieving this reality for the thousands of Indigenous language speakers in Oregon who are from present-day Mexico, Central, and South America.

During my experience as an indigenous interpreter in the state of Oregon in the United States, I have been able to help indigenous people, specifically from the Jakalteko/Popti' Mayan people in judicial and health settings. These linguistic supports have been fundamental both for patients who go to hospitals and for doctors. The patients' medical history has been successfully communicated to doctors, based on that, they have made their diagnoses, medical recommendations and treatments. As a matter of right, the patients have been informed in their native language, in this case, in Jakalteko/Popti'. Otherwise, the doctors would not have been able to support the patients and something very delicate, the language barriers, could cause deaths, if people are not treated correctly.

Likewise, interpretation has supported judicial hearings, so that people are tried in their languages ??and when necessary, able to express their testimonies to judges.

Despite the efforts made and the self-training of interpreters, in some judicial cases they have been asked to have official appointments or accreditations to interpret, so the support of the authorities of the state of Oregon in the service of people with linguistic needs and promoting official accreditations for interpreters, would greatly help to improve judicial and health services, since it is a multilingual and multicultural state. And it would contribute to compliance with laws or international conventions on linguistic and cultural rights.

Over the last few years, the population of Indigenous language speakers in Oregon has continued to grow. It is now estimated that over 50,000 Indigenous language speakers live in our state. Many of these Oregonians who need services live in rural

communities, far from the I-5 corridor.

HB 2976 will help break down barriers to providing Indigenous language interpretation for many Oregonians who need it. We urge your support of HB 2976.

Sincerely,

Edy Benjamín López Castillo