

February 25, 2025

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

For the record, my name is Jessica Bonilla, I am a Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM) at a federally qualified health clinic and have privileges at a highly accredited hospital in Oregon.

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 time as a CNM in the state of Oregon, I have witnessed hospitals and language service companies often search endlessly without success for Indigenous interpreters, creating health disparities and putting patients at risk. As a provider, I have seen the following barriers firsthand:

- I have not been able to consent patients when treatment and procedures are required, putting patients at risk as well as my career.
- I have not been able to assess patients' history and conditions, leading to higher rates of infection and severe pregnancy complications that affect the pregnant person and infant, which could otherwise be avoided.
- I have prescribed treatment for preventable infections with poor patient follow through due to not being able to provide proper education.
- I have not been able to explain high risk and time sensitive diagnosis that are life threatening or have long term health implications for the pregnant person or fetus
- I have seen an increased rate of patient trauma from unconsented care, leading to an increase in depression and anxiety during pregnancy and postpartum, and well as further distrust in the medical industry.
- I have not been able to properly screen for intimate partner violence, putting at risk affected pregnant people as well as other children in the household
- I have not been able to provide birth control counseling, leading to an increase in undesired pregnancies
- I have not been able to address housing and food insecurity needs, putting families at further risk of social and health disparities
- I have had to default to requesting family members to interpret when available, which is medically irresponsible and unethical, putting patients at risk due to misinterpretation

Over the last few years, the population of Indigenous language speakers in Oregon has continued to grow, and it is imperative for the health of our communities, that we have reliable Indigenous interpreters available to provide high quality, patient-centered care to all the patients we serve.

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,



Jessica Bonilla, CNM