



OREGON
ASSOCIATION OF
NURSERIES

**Testimony before House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services
House Bill 2976 - Relating to funding services for
interpretation of indigenous languages**

By Jeff Stone, Executive Director, Oregon Association of Nurseries
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Chair Hartman, Vice-Chair Scharf, Vice-Chair Nguyen, and members of the committee, my name is Jeff Stone, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 2976.

Background on the Nursery and Greenhouse Industry

The nursery and greenhouse industry is the state's largest agricultural sector, with over \$1.2 billion in sales across the nation and the globe. Nationally, Oregon ranks third in nursery production. **Traded Sector:** Nearly 80% of the nursery stock grown in our state leaves our borders – with over 50% reaching markets east of the Mississippi River. **By the numbers:** #1 in US: sales of conifers, shade trees, Christmas trees, and flowering trees. \$443.2 million in annual payroll - \$44,108 average annual pay. We send ecologically friendly, carbon sequestering, green products out of the state, and we bring traded sector dollars back to Oregon. **Who we are:** Nursery association members represent wholesale plant growers, Christmas tree growers, retailers, and greenhouse operators. Our members are located throughout the state, with our largest nursery growing operations found in Clackamas, Marion, Washington, Yamhill, and Multnomah Counties.

HB 2976 is a timely bill

Many of the workers that are employed by nurseries may have limited English proficiency and speak an Indigenous language from present-day Mexico, Central, or South America as their primary language. Several state entities require interpreters to be credentialed to provide services. In order to earn a credential, interpreters must demonstrate that they are qualified, often through passing a language proficiency evaluation. Such evaluations don't exist for languages from these

regions. This can make it challenging for interpretation services to be provided for these languages in a variety of settings.

HB 2976 would provide funding to develop evaluations for some of the most commonly spoken languages on farms throughout the state. It would also dedicate resources for the recruitment and retention of interpreters, and the coordination of appointments across a variety of entities. As you can imagine, there are a plethora of challenges facing the immigrant workforce – it is critical to erase as many issues as possible for a nursery or farm to operate.

HB 2976 will help ensure our workers are healthy and our operations are efficient. This bill is helpful to agricultural operations and workers alike. We urge your support for this bill.