

Submitter: Michelle Graas

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2976

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

I am writing to you today in support of HB 2976 to reduce barriers to interpretation for indigenous language speakers.

All Oregonians deserve to be understood and have others understand them. But that is not the reality for the 50,000+ Oregonians who speak an Indigenous language from present-day Mexico, Central, or South America.

With limited exceptions, credentials are required by some state entities to provide interpretation services. Many interpreters of indigenous languages are currently excluded from credentialing due to a lack of proficiency exams in these languages.

HB 2976 would allocate funding to develop language proficiency evaluations, recruit and retain a qualified workforce, and coordinate appointments across many different entities, helping remove significant barriers for individuals needing interpretation services in some of life's most critical moments.

No Oregonian should be faced with language access barriers in emergency rooms, nor if they need to seek legal assistance after becoming a victim of crime. HB 2976 will help close these barriers and we urge your support of this important bill.

I strongly urge you to support HB 2976.

Sincerely,
Michelle Graas
Portland, OR