



Legacy Health
1919 NW Lovejoy St
Portland, Oregon 97209

March 17, 2025

House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services
Oregon State Legislature
Salem, Oregon

Re: House Bill 2976

Chair Hartman and Members of the Committee:

Legacy Health is a nonprofit health care provider in the Portland-Vancouver area and mid-Willamette Valley with an integrated network of care providers in over 100 primary care, urgent care, and specialty care clinics, and six community-based and nationally recognized hospitals.

Legacy supports House Bill 2976 to increase access to validated language testing for Indigenous languages of Mexico and Guatemala for several reasons.

Primarily, our mission is to provide good health for our people, our patients, our communities, and our world. This includes providing timely care to all patients, regardless of their language. HB 2976 aligns with our goal to provide accurate, meaningful language access to our patients who speak languages other than English.

We struggle to find in-person interpreters who speak Indigenous languages of Mexico and Guatemala, which means we must rely on a phone interpreting company based in Florida and other large phone interpreting companies who often outsource these languages overseas. Indigenous languages are not always available without pre-scheduling them. You can imagine the frustration, panic, and fear patients must feel in an emergency when they cannot communicate. Clinical staff, who strive to provide the highest quality of care, experience moral distress when they struggle to assess the patient's medical situation due to a language barrier.

Secondarily, Legacy values supporting the local economy. Increasing the number of Indigenous language interpreters in Oregon provides employment locally where today we are outsourcing this service to another state. The availability of local Indigenous language interpreters not only benefits health systems throughout the state, but also benefits schools, social services, and other community organizations.

Thirdly, additional validated language testing of Indigenous languages is in alignment with Legacy's own language testing process for bilingual staff, and that of many other healthcare systems in Oregon. A validated exam is the best measure of one's ability to

speak fluently in their language pairs. Accurate listening, speaking, and comprehension are critical elements when communicating in a health care setting.

Creating a pathway to allow more Indigenous language interpreters to obtain Oregon Qualification will reduce delays to obtaining culturally competent care, improve language access for the community, and increase racial equity.

Legacy Health urges you to support House Bill 2976.

Sincerely,

Erin Neff-Minyard

Erin Neff-Minyard (Mar 17, 2025 14:44 PDT)

Erin Neff-Minyard, Ed.M., CHI™
Oregon Certified Spanish Healthcare Interpreter
Language Access Program Coordinator