



# Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Department of Transportation

Director's Office

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**DATE:** April 14, 2025

**TO:** Joint Committee on Transportation

**FROM:** Amy Joyce, DMV Administrator

**SUBJECT:** HB 2990 – DMV Non-English Language Support

## BACKGROUND

The Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Division (DMV) of the Oregon Department of Transportation serves nearly every Oregonian by providing driver licenses and ID cards, vehicle titles and registration, and much more. Oregonians who have limited English proficiency (LEP) can have difficulty accessing DMV services and passing the driver knowledge test due to language barriers.

For several years DMV has worked to improve translations for various materials, including through comprehensive re-translations rather than piecemeal updates when a change is warranted. DMV has also hired different translators and had bilingual DMV staff review and improve professional translations. Despite these efforts, feedback from community members as well as knowledge test pass rates show LEP customers still face significant language-related challenges in accessing DMV services and the driver knowledge test, in particular.

## BILL CONTENT

DMV worked collaboratively with this bill's sponsors to identify a comprehensive and sustainable solution to improve translated DMV materials and driver knowledge tests pass rates for LEP customers. This solution is reflected in the -2 amendment, which is loosely modeled on the Secretary of State's approach to material translation. The amendment would create an Office of Language Translation within ODOT. This office would contract with a single vendor to perform any translation of DMV materials. Additionally, the amendment directs DMV to work with members of the various language communities and experts in language translation to inform these efforts.

This approach should vastly improve the quality and consistency of DMV translations. Working with a single translation company would allow for development of a standard glossary of terms, application of uniform revisions and updates, use of the most appropriate dialect, and support ongoing improvements over time, among other things.

Implementing this bill will be an iterative process—DMV will not have all materials translated into five languages as of the measure's effective date. DMV must hire an employee to lead the

effort, solicit a translation vendor, and secure a contract. The department would focus on the most common and most important materials DMV customers use, such as the driver manual and knowledge test questions. Future translations would focus on other materials.

The -2 amendment would also create a program to provide grants to providers who offer traffic safety education courses in languages other than English. This would expand access to educational courses for Oregonians with limited English proficiency, helping them learn the rules of the road and safe driving habits as they prepare to take the knowledge and skills tests to obtain their driver license.

The Department understands this grant funding is intended to support anyone who wants to be a safe driver and follow state traffic laws. It is not meant to expand access to teen driver education, exclusively, which would be the result of the -2 as it references “traffic safety education courses.” ODOT looks forward to working with the bill’s sponsors in identifying appropriate clarifying terminology that can be included in a technical cleanup amendment.

Since the work envisioned in this amendment is a new body of work, it is not funded in the Governor’s 2025-27 Budget. DMV would require additional funding to implement this measure as envisioned in the -2 amendment. This would be in addition to the unspecified General Fund appropriation the amendment would provide to finance the proposed grant program discussed above.

DMV wants to ensure Oregonians with limited English proficiency have an equal opportunity to obtain a driver license and complete other DMV transactions with the support of high quality, accurate, and consistent translated materials. The department appreciates the open and collaborative dialogue that the bill’s sponsors have fostered in developing the -2 amendment, which will help advance this shared goal.

## **CONCLUSION**

DMV serves nearly every Oregonian, including those with limited English proficiency. These customers can have difficulty accessing and successfully availing themselves of DMV services, including the driver knowledge test, due to language barriers. While DMV provides translated materials and has made numerous efforts to improve these resources in recent years, LEP customers continue to experience challenges as demonstrated by knowledge test pass rates. HB 2990 with the -2 amendment will help DMV provide improved translations, thereby increasing access to DMV services and credentials, like driver licenses.