

TRAVIS NELSON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HOUSE DISTRICT 44
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Testimony in Support for House Bill 2990

Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, Vice-Chairs Starr and Boshart Davis, and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

For the record, my name is Travis Nelson, and I serve as the State Representative for House District 44, North and Northeast Portland. I am here to speak in support on HB 2990 and will be providing some background on the importance of the bill. Representative Muñoz will be speaking to the policy of this bill.

Several bills have been introduced as a result of HB 4052 from 2022, which directed the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office to establish a community-centered approach to addressing the social determinants of health. HB 2990 is a direct product of that ongoing work.

Through the committed efforts of the Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs, the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office, and advocates across our communities, we uncovered a critical barrier facing thousands of Oregonians, especially Spanish-speaking residents, who are disproportionately failing the Class C driver knowledge test.

To put the issue in perspective, of the over 223,000 Class C driver knowledge tests administered in Oregon, the overall pass rate is around 40%. But when broken down by language, a troubling pattern emerges. In 2024 alone, more than 75,000 tests were administered in Spanish, which is the most common non-English language spoken in Oregon. The pass rate for Spanish speakers was just 21%. That means four out of five Spanish-speaking test-takers are failing. In comparison, English speakers pass at a rate of 50%. These disparities are both stark and unacceptable.

This isn't a reflection of ability but a reflection of real barrier. It also deeply demonstrates the gap in our translation services and the inequities those services can unintentionally create. Through conversations with the DMV, review of the translation process, and feedback from community members, we found that critical information is quite literally being lost in translation. This is leaving thousands of Oregonians without access to the tools they need to safely operate vehicles in our state.

HB 2990 was shaped by this community engagement and built in collaboration with the DMV to address these failures head-on. What began as a bill I introduced to spotlight these disparities has been further strengthened under Representative Muñoz's leadership, bringing in new insights and solutions that reflect what both the community and the agency need which she will speak to. I will also be working with Representative Muñoz, the DMV and the community on amendments to address a few minor changes that have come up.

HB 2990 moves us toward a more responsive system, and I strongly urge your support.

Thank you,

State Representative Travis Nelson
House District 44, North/NE Portland