

My name is Melanie DeLeon, and I am a nationally certified Sign Language interpreter with 30 years of experience, as well as a coordinator of interpreting services at an educational institution in the State of Oregon.

I'm writing to ask you to oppose SB950. This bill states it intends to clarify and streamline the licensure law that was created during the 2023 session for sign language interpreters in Oregon. I am a member of the RAC for HB 2696, the committee responsible for the rule-making process. The goal for sign language licensure is to protect the rights of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians. The amendments put forth in SB 950 will derail that goal and will cause further harm to Deaf children in Oregon public schools.

A critical reason the sign language interpreter bill was supported, written, and passed originally was because it created a way to raise the skill level requirement of educational ASL interpreters from an Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) score of 3.5, to a 4.0 ([OAR for Educational ASL interpreters](#)), [EIPA Comparison](#)). Our neighboring states, Washington and California, long ago recognized this need, and have already raised their standards for educational interpreters, requiring an EIPA score of 4.0 in 20017 (WA) and 2009 (CA). These States have passed bills to safeguard the linguistic, educational and overall well being of their Deaf children. The educational specialty license was Oregon's response to raise our standards. HB950 would now push this requirement out another 12 years. Having Oregon be 28 years behind California, and 20 behind Washington.

By removing the educational interpreting specialty license, and its safeguarding intent, there would be no leverage or requirement to demand local Educational Service Districts to hire educational ASL interpreters with a higher EIPA score of 4.0, thus continuing the harm of Deaf children in Oregon. The Oregon Department of Education supports the educational ASL interpreter specialty license, I hope, because it too can no longer deny the harm the state has been causing.

I respectfully ask you to oppose the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Amendment Bill (SB 950) so we can continue to improve our ability to protect and serve the rights of Oregon's Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing most vulnerable citizens- it's youth.

Sincerely,

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Additional Resources:

<https://wou.edu/rrcd/home/cna/>