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House Committee On Commerce and Consumer Protection
Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 950 – Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Amendment

Hello Chair Sosa, Vice Chairs Chaichi and Osborne, and members of the committee. My name is Adam Logan, and as a hard of hearing individual, I'm deeply invested in the well-being of the Deaf and hard of hearing community. I've worked as a Hard of Hearing advocate at Bridges Oregon, and previously served as secretary for the Oregon Association of the Deaf. My experience also includes roles as a Deaf Interpreter, Co-Navigator, Support Service Provider, and Life Coach, all within the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) community. I am committed to supporting the needs of this population.

I am writing to show my support for Senate Bill 950 A. This bill seeks to change the current law about how sign language interpreters get licensed in Oregon. While the original law had good intentions, implementation has been difficult, and SB 950 A offers crucial solutions.

Since the new law started, the Health Licensing Office (HLO) has had trouble following the licensing rules. This is because there are unnecessary steps in the different license types, the process isn't clear, and ultimately, it limits the number of qualified interpreters in Oregon. SB 950 A directly addresses these problems by making the licensing process simpler and creating a system that can last.

The current licensing system is unintentionally making it harder to help the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities. The high costs of getting a license, along with the complicated requirements, discourage qualified interpreters from getting licensed in Oregon. This makes the shortage of interpreters even worse, limiting access to important communication services in areas like schools, hospitals, and mental health clinics.

SB 950 A proposes a key step toward a fairer and more accessible system by telling the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters to review fees and set them based on national averages and the actual cost of the programs. This will make sure the fees are fair and sustainable, and will remove a major reason why people might not want to get licensed in Oregon and work elsewhere or go into a different line of work.

It's important that we support new interpreters joining the profession. SB 950 is a productive step to fixing the current system and creating a way for new interpreters to use their skills to

help the community. By removing unnecessary barriers, we can create a strong interpreter workforce.

The current fee structure is unsustainable. It creates a significant financial burden on interpreters, especially those who are new to their careers or working in areas where help is limited. SB 950 A's direction for fee review is essential to addressing this unfairness.

SB 950 A makes the licensing process clearer and straightforward for those seeking certification. This will foster a more supportive environment for interpreters and contribute to the success of the HLO.

Senate Bill 950 A represents a critical opportunity to improve Oregon's sign language interpreter licensing system. By addressing the problems that have been identified and by prioritizing accessibility and sustainable interpreter licensure processes and fees, this legislation will strengthen the interpreter workforce, reduce barriers to communication access for the Deaf community, and ensure that Oregon continues to be a supportive and inclusive state. I humbly recommend the committee to pass Senate Bill 950 with amendment.

Respectfully, Adam Logan

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