

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2339**  
**Submitted to the House Judiciary Committee**  
**By Shannon Wight, Deputy Director, Partnership for Safety and Justice**  
**February 2, 2014**

Chair Barker, Vice-Chair Williamson, Vice-Chair Olson, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Shannon Wight and I am the Deputy Director at Partnership for Safety and Justice. Partnership of Safety and Justice is a statewide, non-profit organization that has worked in Oregon for 15 years. We are focused on creating a public safety and criminal justice system that works for everyone. We believe that effective public safety requires being smart about crime by putting accountability first, providing crime survivors with the services they need, and supporting proven strategies to prevent future violence.

Those values drive our work, which is why I am here today on behalf of Partnership for Safety and Justice in support of HB 2339. HB 2339 would enable non-English-speaking crime victims to understand court proceedings and fully engage in the justice system. Currently, these victims are provided translators if they testify, but not if they simply exercise their right to watch the trial.

This is an area of Oregon's victims' rights law that has been overlooked and we thank the Judicial Department for seeing the problem and bringing this this bill.

Court proceedings are confusing to most people who don't work in the justice system. Court proceedings are stressful for victims to go through—not only because what may be at stake, but because the act of going through the process itself can trigger the trauma of the victimization. It is critical that we honor the right of victims to participate fully in their trial by providing them with a translator.

A fair and functional court system depends on everyone understanding what is happening, whether the person is the victim, the accused, or a witness. When interpreters are not provided to non-English-speaking victims, victims have had to rely on their family or friends to interpret legal proceedings. While family and friends may have the best of intentions while interpreting court proceedings, they may unintentionally jeopardize the victim's ability to engage. Family and friends may insert personal bias for or against the accused in their interpretations; may not be familiar with legal terms and may misunderstand important procedural steps or nuances of proceedings; may insert advice or additional language in their interpretation; and may not respect the victim's privacy. We can address these issues by providing victims with a qualified interpreter during a trial or other proceeding.

Partnership for Safety and Justice believes that everyone should be able to access safety and a fair justice system. We are pleased that the Judicial Department has requested this change. We ask that you support HB 2339.