

Rep. Rachel Prusak, Chair
House Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

April 6, 2021

SUBJECT: Support for HB3231, the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Bill

To the Chair Prusak, Vice-Chair Hayden, Vice-Chair Salinas, and members of the Committee:

My name is Abel Cosentino and I am a Sign Language interpreter and I am writing to urge the Committee's support of HB3231.

HB3231 will protect the more than 180,000 Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians in our state by establishing a licensure requirement for Sign Language interpreters. Currently in Oregon, anyone can legally represent themselves as a Sign Language interpreter whether or not they are qualified and provide services in settings such as emergency press-conferences, drug treatment facilities, or attorney-client meetings. This results in unqualified or unethical interpreting services, violating the rights of Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians and potentially causing great harm to consumers. Along with the risk to the consumers, hiring entities including government agencies are at risk of lawsuits if they hire interpreters who are unqualified.

HB3231 will create a State Board of Sign Language Interpreters within Oregon Health Authority, outline requirements for interpreter licensure and establish standards for the profession. It will also protect consumers and hiring entities by requiring licensure to work as a Sign Language interpreter in Oregon. Over 30 states have established such requirements for Sign Language interpreters and the passing of this bill would ensure Oregon is in line with national best practices.

There are interpreters who are not properly trained or vetted who have worked with my deaf parents. Although I appreciate their willingness to help, they are actually putting my mother at risk if they do not hold the proper certification to do medical or judicial work - in particular.

I respectfully ask for the Committee's support of HB3231 the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Bill because this law will protect the rights of Oregon's Deaf,

Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Abel Cosentino', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Abel Cosentino
5815 NW Garfield Ave.
Vancouver, WA 98663