

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

April 5, 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 Elisa Maroney, I am a certified interpreter and an interpreter educator. I have been interpreting since 1985 and training interpreters in Oregon since 1993. I am writing to urge the Committee to support HB3231. Interpreter licensure is a critical step in the right direction to better serve the deaf and hearing communities in the state of Oregon.

This bill 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, emergency medical situations or attorney-client meetings. This results in unqualified or unethical interpreting services, violating the rights of our 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.

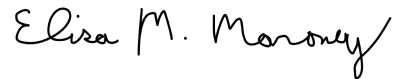
HB3231 will create a State Board of Sign Language Interpreters within Oregon Health Authority, outline requirements for interpreter licensure, establish standards for the profession and by doing this protect consumers and hiring entities by requiring licensure to work as a Sign Language interpreter in 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.

This issue has been making its rounds in the Deaf community since I began preparing interpreters in the state of Oregon. In 2008, after two decades of working with the Oregon Department of Education Educational Interpreter subcommittee, Oregon Administrative Rule 581-015-2035 providing minimal requirements for educational interpreters was finally

established. My hope is that this licensure will protect other vulnerable members of the Deaf community, as well as hearing consumers and the hiring entities.

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 that reads "Elisa M. Maroney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'E' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'y'.

Elisa M. Maroney, Ph. D.

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