

Sen. Kathleen Taylor
Senate Committee on Labor and Business 900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

January 27, 2022

SUBJECT: Support for 1562, the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Bill To the Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Knopp, and members of the Committee:

My name is Drew Treacy, I am a Deaf person, a user of American Sign Language interpreters. I am writing to urge the Committee's support of SB1562.

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.

SB1562 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.

When seeking medical information or assistance it is very important to me that the information relayed to me to/from the Doctor is accurate and clear. A licensure for American Sign Language interpreters will push to ensure that interpreters working in very important fields such as medical and mental health are competent signers.

I cannot tell you how many times my friends and the people in Deaf community suffered in the medical/mental health setting because of unqualified interpreters. Not all Deaf people are the same thus, not all interpreters are the same. This licensure bill will ensure that ASL interpreters are licensed to do the job.

Oregon is known for being progressive. Please take one more step further by passing this bill to better serve our Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing community.

I respectfully ask for the Committee's support of SB1562 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,

Drew Treacy
Portland, OR