

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:
I am writing to urge this Committee to support SB 1562.*

I am a nationally certified American Sign Language/English interpreter who has been working beside the Deaf, Deafblind, and hard of hearing communities for over 10 years. As a professional interpreter I am requesting that licensure be required to practice as a professional ASL interpreter in Oregon.

SB1562 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.

SB1562 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.

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.

*Thank You,
Jenna Curtis
11440 SW Lomita Ave
Tigard, OR 97223*