

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.

My name is Tara Troup, I am a sign language interpreter. 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.

As a working interpreter, I see the detrimental effects of having underqualified interpreters in medical settings. Patients do not get appropriate access to their own medical care and providers lose confidence in their patient or in the worthiness of providing interpreters at all. In Emergency situations, unqualified "interpreters" may misrepresent vital information to an already vulnerable population, putting people at further risk.

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,
Tara Troup