



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:

As the Department Chair of Portland Community College's ASL/English Interpreting Program, I'm writing in support of SB1562. This bill is necessary to protect the rights of all Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deafblind (DHHDB) citizens in Oregon. This bill will raise the standards of the profession and support novice interpreters.

This bill establishes a licensure for sign language interpreters, ensuring that that work goes to qualified individuals. In my role as a department chair, I have seen agencies hire students who were dismissed from our program. These expelled students were not qualified and did not complete their education, but found jobs as interpreters due to the lack of oversight enforcing a consumer's right to a qualified interpreter.

I have received countless complaints from Deaf people about unethical and unqualified interpreters working in Oregon. They often turn to me or other interpreter educators because they have no options and no support system when their rights are violated by interpreters or hiring entities. With a licensure requirement, licensed interpreters would be listed on a public registry and required to maintain their credentials and ethical practices. Hiring entities would be able to hire an interpreter with confidence and consumers can contact the licensing office should any issues occur. This protects the hiring entities and consumers' rights.

In the past, I worked as a licensed interpreter in Illinois. I can personally attest that licensure systems for interpreters are successful. A licensure system protects consumers and providers, and it also raises awareness about the profession resulting in an increased number of qualified working interpreters. SB1562 supports the growth of the field by supporting novice interpreters, allowing them to work with provisional licenses under the supervision of an experienced interpreter. This gives novice interpreters the opportunity to gain experience without the fear of causing unintentional harm. Experienced interpreters also benefit from connecting with newly educated interpreters since best practices in the field are rapidly changing.

Over 30 states across the United States require certification or licensure to work as a sign language interpreter. These states recognize the need for state-level oversight for sign language interpreters. I urge Oregon to join the list of states dedicated to protecting Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deafblind citizens from unqualified or unethical interpreters.

Sincerely,

Mish Ktejik

Mish Ktejik, MA, NIC, SC:L
Faculty Department Chair
ASL/English Interpreting Program
Portland Community College

