

Submitter: Holly Hoeksema

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2696

1/30/23

Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Bill

Dear Legislators:

My name is Holly Hoeksema and I am an ally of the Deaf Community .

This Bill protects the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities 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 such as government agencies are at risk of lawsuits if they hire interpreters who are unqualified. Licensure will establish standards for the profession, as well as 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 is incredibly important to me. I have close friends here in Redmond who are deaf, and both of them have had traumatic experiences in hospitals because there were not qualified, truly competent interpreters provided for them. The ability to communicate with one's healthcare providers is an essential and basic right that all Americans should have. It is absolutely unconscionable that we do not already have a law in place to ensure interpreter legitimacy and competency.

I respectfully ask you to support 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,  
Holly Hoeksema  
1112 NW Redwood Place  
Redmond, OR 97756