

Submitter: Ayla Adkins

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2696

Support the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Bill

I am a Sign Language interpreting student in Oregon who is about to graduate with my degree.

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.

I have seen loved ones get denied access to qualified interpreters due to the lack of this bill. They have gone through surgeries, agreed to medications, and have had such terrible experiences that could have cost them their lives all because they didn't have the knowledge to consent to the situation. That is because the interpreters provided were underqualified. You must stop thinking of this community as just 'people'. You know that friend you have that has supported you at your worst? She is now in surgery without being able to tell the doctor that she is allergic to a medication they will be using. You know your friend, whose smile and laugh can light up the entire room, he is now in such pain and can't communicate to the nurses what is wrong. You know the person who has been struggling with cancer, they are in tears because this is the third appointment they've had about their treatment options, and they couldn't understand half of what was being told to them because their interpreter wasn't qualified. These are people. This is a community. These could very well be people you love. Give them the basic rights they deserve-- language. Denying people qualified interpreters is stripping them of their autonomy. These things are not privileges-- they are rights.

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.