

Submitter: nicolas yopp

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2696

Jan. 30, 2023

Rep. Rob Nosse  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support HB2696, the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Bill

To the Chair Nosse, Vice Committee: Chair Goodwin, ViceChair Nelson, and members of the Committee:

I am deaf and have lived in the rural area of Central Oregon most of my life.

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.

The last 10 years have been brutal for me and my deaf wife in regards to constantly going to the medical settings for various reasons; broken bones, some ongoing health issues that took several doctor visits and required some exams which needed to be put under anesthesia, then eventually life threatening surgeries which included overnight stays. When we are under the influence of pain and/or grogginess from the drugs the hospital gives us, we have a much harder time understanding the nurse and doctors that try to talk with us. Even worse when we get an unqualified interpreter that has no reason being there if they can't respect our boundaries, have no ethics and most importantly, are not able to translate effectively especially with medical terminology. Any important information that we receive from unqualified

interpreters gets drastically reduced since they don't know the signs. I had one unqualified interpreter (she learned very minimal ASL from church) that has crossed her boundaries multiple times during one visit. There just happened to be another deaf person there and she was going back and forth between both of us and explaining what was happening to the other person which is a big NO-NO. On top of that, during the evasive pedicure where I was put under anesthesia, she still stayed in the operating room when there was no need for her to be there since I was "asleep". We have no way of reporting the interpreters and this imposter needs to stop.

Until recently, the latest bill that passed last year which required medical certified interpreters in all medical settings. I unfortunately needed to go back to the hospital again last fall and wasn't looking forward to going, but as we requested for a certified interpreter over the phone, they understood right away what we were talking about, so that was a nice change. But this bill is a licensure purpose and that will help weed out those who are not qualified and also have a chance to report to the licensure board of any issues that may arise and get fined and/or suspended license. Same concept for any type of contractors, electrician, plumbers or other types of jobs that require a license. They are required to renew every 2 years and they can also get fined and/or license suspended by the board if they disregard the law.

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.

Respectfully,

Nicolas Yopp  
Deschutes County,  
Redmond, OR