

February 1, 2023

Rep. Rob Nosse  
House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care  
900 Court St NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 2696, the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Bill

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair Goodwin, Vice-Chair Nelson, and members of the Committee:

My name is Colleen Dougherty and I am a Sign Language consumer who resides in your district.

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 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Dougherty". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "C." and the last name "Dougherty" clearly legible.

Colleen Dougherty  
1121 NW MT Washington Drive  
Bend OR 97703