

Submitter: Steve Wasserman

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2696

February 3, 2023

The Honorable Jeff Golden and Pam Marsh
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Bill

Dear Jeff Golden and Pam Marsh:

My name is Steve Wasserman 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 am 75 years old and I have recently had to deal with a few severe medical issues. Any time I know I must go to the hospital, I become very stressed worrying about being provided a skilled certified medical interpreter. In the past, I have had to make-do with either inferior interpreters or rely on family members to do the best they can. The process leaves me feeling a loss of control over my own medical issues and decisions. Try to imagine being placed in a hospital where you are at the mercy of the medical providers because you do not know the language. However, if you are provided a skilled interpreter, not some random person off the street, the issue can be mitigated.

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,
Steve Wasserman
1954 Soda Mountain Road
Ashland, OR 97520