

Submitter: Kristen King
On Behalf Of: Deaf DeafBlind and HardofHearing
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
Measure: HB2696

My name is Kristen King. I'm a resident of Prineville, Oregon with many Deaf friends as well as friends who have Deaf family. This bill needs to pass to support Deafblind, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf people who are currently at the mercy of an inadequate system. A system that can randomly assign fumbling beginners to a complex and stressful situation is utterly unacceptable. Who would ask an undergraduate who took a year of Civics once to represent a client pro bono? Who would consider the moral, legal, and financial repercussions to be acceptable? No one with any foresight or compassion.

The current situation is even worse, however, because it's not only subject matter knowledge at stake when unqualified interpreters are permitted. It's communication itself. The legal fallout alone of a client needing a qualified interpreter who receives the dubious assistance of an amateur is catastrophic. People who are frightened, struggling, or in pain should not be forced to scramble for the simple right to understand what is happening to them and make informed decisions about the next steps. Over 30 states understand this and have passed similar laws requiring qualified interpreters. I ask Oregon to do the same and protect Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and Deaf communities.

I am hearing. If I have the time and money, someday I'd like to study American Sign Language and potentially move on to be an interpreter. The stories every single ASL user has of receiving wildly inadequate interpreters have degraded the entire profession. Unqualified interpreters who merely check a legal box of 'an interpreter was offered' are a blight on the entire state of Oregon. It's ethically bankrupt to continue as the state has, allowing the unqualified a platform to 'interpret' so poorly that the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing will do anything in their power to avoid dealing with them. Solve this problem. Support this Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Bill.

Sincerely,

K. King