

Submitter: Grace Boehm  
On Behalf Of: Cara Frank and the Deaf Community  
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care  
Measure: HB2696

February 3, 2023  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Bill

Dear Legislators,

My name is Grace Boehm and I am a healthcare worker 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.

As a healthcare provider in the Bend Emergency Department, I am witness every day to the struggles that folks for whom spoken English is not their primary language. I have personally witnessed delays in care for those in the Deaf community because we rely only on Video Interpreters or in-person interpreters who are not qualified to be interpreting. Our patients deserve qualified in-person interpreters for their medical needs. It is truly an issue that is life or death. Nobody should have to lie in pain and isolation while they wait for a video interpreter to load on a screen, or rely on interpreters who are underqualified or members of their own families. It is simply not right.

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,

Grace Boehm  
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Bend, OR, 97701