

Submitter: Jana H

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2696

Dear House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

I am writing to you about HB2696 and Oregon's desperate need to pass this bill. HB2696 protects the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing communities and provides equitable services for these communities by establishing a licensure requirement for Sign Language Interpreters. In Oregon, the current environment is that 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. This violates the rights of Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians.

HB2696 establishes licensure that will have standards for the profession of Sign Language Interpreters within Oregon. Already, more than 30 states have established such requirements for Sign Language Interpreters. It is time for Oregon to stop ignoring a portion of its community members and begin providing equitable experiences.

I have lived and visited other countries where English is not the primary language. I have had to go to doctor's appointments/urgent care in these countries. Have you ever experienced the terror and anxiety that comes with receiving medical attention when you can't understand those who are trying to care for you? Or you can only understand a small portion of what your medical providers are trying to tell you? When they ask you how they should proceed, and you can't tell them because you don't have enough information on the situation? That has happened to me, and I don't wish it to happen to anyone, anywhere. Imagine this same scenario, but it's happening in Oregon, and it's happening to people who live and work here. It has happened to a former co-worker of mine.

If you still don't understand what it means to have an unqualified Sign Language Interpreter in Oregon, let me share one last thing with you—for example, if an unqualified Sign Language Interpreter is only able to provide 30% of a doctor's comments to you, then if you have a broken leg, you will be told: the doctor says \_\_\_\_\_ broken in \_\_\_\_\_. She suggests \_\_\_\_\_ in one month. Do you \_\_\_\_\_ proceed? How would you proceed with that medical experience? How would you feel? How cared for would you be? Do you feel this would violate your rights?

I urge you to support the Oregon Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Bill. Thank

you.

Jana