

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

January 27, 2023

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

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

I am writing to urge this Committee to support HB 2696.

My name is Brandon Heaps. I am a Sign Language Interpreter, as well as a hiring entity, and I am writing to urge the Committee's support of HB2696.

HB2696 will protect the more than 180,000 Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Oregonians in our state by establishing a licensure requirement for Sign Language interpreters. Currently in Oregon, anyone can legally represent themselves as a Sign Language interpreter, regardless if they are qualified. 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.

HB2696 will create a State Board of Sign Language Interpreters within Oregon Health Authority, outline requirements for interpreter licensure and establish standards for the profession. Over 30 states have established such requirements and the passing of this bill would ensure Oregon is advancing in line with national standards.

My first encounter with a Deaf person was my freshman year of college. Throughout this ongoing relationship, I see the barriers he faces daily, and one of those barriers is unqualified "interpreters." Seeing this first hand led me to pursue a career in sign language interpreting, and now own and operate Mosaic Interpreting, LLC. As a hiring entity and professional Sign Language Interpreter, I am in support of HB2696.

Sincerely,

Brandon Heaps
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