



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.

Founded in 2017, Bridges Oregon, Inc. is a new culturally responsive nonprofit organization serving Oregonians who are Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, or face other communication barriers. It is in our mission to facilitate equity and inclusiveness and to provide a bridge to opportunities through advocacy, education, and communication. This organization was created by Deaf individuals, we provide high-quality services to enable the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing to freely interact with mainstream society. Bridges Oregon's interpreting service known as A5 Interpreting is a new emerging service to bridge the communication gap in Oregon.

HB 2696 will protect more than 1 million individuals who are living with hearing loss in the state of Oregon and the 4,021 Oregonians who use sign language to communicate (source: BridgesOregon.org) by establishing a licensure requirement for Sign Language interpreters. Currently, anyone in Oregon can legally represent themselves as a Sign Language interpreter whether or not they are qualified. This includes interpreters who have failed their certification exams or had their certifications revoked for unethical practices. These unqualified individuals 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 including government agencies are at risk of lawsuits if they hire unqualified interpreters.

HB 2696 will create a State Board of Sign Language Interpreters within Oregon Health Authority, outline requirements for interpreter licensure, and establish standards for the profession. It will 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 respectfully ask for the Committee's support of HB 2696 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chad A. Ludwig". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping flourish at the end.

Chad A. Ludwig, MSW, ADAC, OHCI, DI  
Executive Director