

Submitter: Francisco Cruz
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure: SB911

Chair Lieber, Vice-Chair Knopp and committee members. My name is Francisco Javier Cruz González.

For many years, the Oregon Legislature has taken significant steps to ensure that all Oregonians have the right to understand and be understood. Through the creation of new state programs and investments in quality interpreting services, the experience of many who do not speak English as their first language has been dramatically improved in a variety of settings.

Unfortunately, there continues to be a lack of quality interpreting services for those who speak the indigenous languages ??of present-day Mexico, Central America, and South America. This is the result of some specific and related factors:

1. Limited funding and low wages for quality interpretation services in indigenous languages. Many entities are hesitant to pay fair wages to indigenous interpreters due to lack of funding, or indigenous interpreters are not paid a fair wage due to lack of accreditation (see point below); Too often, Indigenous Oregonians do not receive interpretation because they or their service provider cannot afford it.
2. The lack of a formal mechanism for indigenous interpreters to demonstrate proficiency or proficiency in an indigenous language, which is a significant barrier to interpreters obtaining the necessary credentials to interpret in court or health care settings, or to advance your professional career;
3. Lack of consultation with indigenous communities in policy and funding discussions related to interpretation;

More than 35,000 Oregonians speak an Indigenous language as their primary language, but the current lack of Indigenous interpretation services all too often results in Indian people in Oregon being denied vital care due to language barriers, inability to access critical services or imprisonment and deportation.

Fortunately, we have an opportunity to address this issue this session with SB 911 and SB 612. SB 911 will establish a commission for the First Nations of South America, Central America, and Mexico within the Oregon Advocacy Commissions. Office), ensuring that Indigenous voices are represented in state government and have a direct voice in policy proposals that concern Native American communities in Oregon.

SB 612 will result in the development of language proficiency assessment

mechanisms for indigenous languages, allowing interpreters to demonstrate their language skills and earn formal accreditation. The bill will also allow indigenous interpreters to receive a living wage and prevent indigenous people in Oregon from being forced to pay for their own interpretation through a potentially unreliable or unqualified interpreter.

I ask for your support for these important bills!

Sincerely,
Francisco Javier Cruz González.