



Date: February 28, 2023
To: Senate Committee on Rules
From: Todd Addams, Interim Executive Director, Basic Rights Oregon
RE: Support SB 612 and SB 911

Chair Lieber, Vice-Chair Knopp, and members of the committee,

I am writing on behalf of Basic Rights Oregon to express our support for Senate Bills 612 and 911, and to urge you to vote YES on advancing them. Basic Rights Oregon is a statewide LGBTQ2SIA+ advocacy organization, and we firmly support all Oregonians having equal access to the services they need in legal, governmental, and medical settings.

We need to improve Oregon's interpretation services. While funding and programs exist for a wide range of languages, one group of Oregonians are still severely lacking in the services they need. Those who speak languages Indigenous to what is modern-day Mexico, Central America, and South America often do not receive proper interpretation services. This is because Oregon lacks a formal interpretive credentialing program for these languages.

Over 35,000 Oregonians speak an Indigenous language as their primary language, but the current lack of Indigenous interpretation services too often leads to Indigenous Oregonians being denied life-saving care due to language barriers, an inability to access critical services, or imprisonment and deportation.

Thankfully, SB612 and SB911 will help mitigate this glaring problem. SB911 will establish a commission for Original Peoples from South America, Central America, and Mexico within the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office. SB612 will create a proper credentialing program for Indigenous language interpreters, allow them to be paid a living wage, and make them accessible to Oregonians who need them.

As advocates for LGBTQ2SIA+ Oregonians, we understand how important it is that someone properly understands and is understood by their doctor, their lawyer, a police officer, or an administrative worker. We also know that LGBTQ2SIA+ immigrants in Oregon are more likely to be low-income, meaning they are more in need of these accessible services.

We hope you will vote YES to advance Senate Bills 612 and 911!

Thank you,

Todd Addams, Interim Executive Director, Basic Rights Oregon