



Chair Lieber, Vice Chair Knopp, and Members of the Senate Committee on Rules,

AFSCME supports SB 612 and SB 911.

Supporting the workforce that supports our communities is critical for our collective wellbeing. Indigenous language interpreters have unique skill sets that are highly valuable to our communities and state as a whole. However, many entities are hesitant to pay Indigenous interpreters fair wages because of a lack of funding, or Indigenous interpreters are not paid a fair wage due to a lack of credentialing; too often, Indigenous Oregonians do not receive interpretation because they or their service provider cannot afford it.

Our statewide systems must meet the needs of our communities and be available in languages that they understand in order to be truly effective. Increased access to interpretation services for Oregonians who speak Indigenous languages from present-day Mexico, Central America, and South America helps ensure that our communities can effectively interact with service providers and public entities, and participate in society visibly and fully.

Without adequate access to interpretation, Oregonians who speak Indigenous languages face tremendous barriers to participating in society and experience devastating human rights violations, including delay or denial of life-saving medical care, inaccessibility of critical services (e.g. safety, public benefits and social programs), wrongful imprisonment, and unjust deportation and family separation.

Senate Bills 612 and 911 make the needed changes and investments to our interpretation workforce and services by:

- Developing a language proficiency evaluation mechanisms for Indigenous languages, so interpreters can demonstrate their language skills and obtain formal credentialing and recognition as competent interpreters (SB 612)
- Investing in Indigenous language interpretation to pay interpreters living wages and ensure that Indigenous language speakers don't have to pay for their own interpretation (SB 612)
- Establish a formal commission for Original Peoples from South America, Central America, and Mexico to have direct influence in policy and law solutions (SB 911)

By investing in Indigenous language interpreters, we can continue to build a more robust workforce and a more equitable Oregon. **We urge your yes vote on SB 612 and SB 911.**