



STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF SB 612 AND SB 911

Dear Chair Lieber, Vice Chair Knopp, and members of the Senate Committee on Rules:

We thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 612 and SB 911, a pair of bills designed to improve access to interpretive services for Oregon's Indigenous communities.

United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555 is the largest private sector labor union in Oregon. Our members come from a number of industries, including grocery, retail, food processing, manufacturing, and healthcare. We are a diverse group of workers who take pride in acting as a strong collective voice for working people.

Over 35,000 Oregonians speak an indigenous language as their primary language, and require interpretive services for critical services, such as legal services and health care. The current system leads to limited access to quality interpretation services for Oregon's Indigenous communities, sometimes resulting in Indigenous Oregonians being denied life-saving medical care, unable to access critical services, or being wrongfully imprisoned and deported.

SB 911 will establish a commission for Original Peoples from South America, Central America, and Mexico within the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office, ensuring that the voices of Indigenous communities are represented in state government and have a direct voice in policy proposals that concern Indigenous Oregonians.

SB 612 will result in the development of language proficiency evaluation mechanisms for Indigenous languages, allowing interpreters to demonstrate their language skills and obtain formal credentialing. The bill will also allow Indigenous interpreters to be paid a living wage and prevent Indigenous Oregonians from being forced to pay for their own interpretation through a potentially unreliable or unqualified interpreter.

In addition to our Indigenous members who may avail themselves of these services, we also have members who work in health care and want to provide patients with the best quality of care. Having a qualified interpreter in the room will increase understanding, and provide greater opportunities for self advocacy. By increasing access to certified interpreters, we are taking a critical step towards providing quality health care and legal services for all.

SB 612 and SB 911 will help address these important issues and ensure that Indigenous Oregonians have access to quality interpretation services. We strongly urge your support.

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