

Nancy Sánchez Koppy  
Tigard, Oregon  
Employment: Legal Support Staff

February 27, 2024

Dear Chair Lieber, Vice Chair Knopp, and members Hansell, Manning, Jr. and Steiner:

I write to you today in support of Notary Training, as proposed under HB 4020. I view the value of the training in its end result. As notaries, we are commissioned by the State to carry out functions of high degree of importance to the public: estate planning documents, agreements, etc. Technology changes often, which affects our approaches to all tasks, including notarization. Required trainings proposed in HB 4020 will allow us to pause periodically to review procedures, discuss glitches in notarization that the State might see trending, and to discuss any technology changes or resources. With the end benefit reflected in the quality of our service to the public.

My experience as a notary has been as legal support staff. I have worked in the legal field since 1991 as a legal assistant and as a paralegal. In those years I have worked for firms large and small and in different states. I have seen that each job presents its unique mixture of legal support needs and many require staff to be notaries. As notaries in law offices, the legal support staff wears two hats: one as a person commissioned by the State to be an impartial witness and the other as legal support staff. We attend notary signings, wearing both hats. We serve clients who come typically with some level of stress and a unique set of circumstances. While our employer might train us for the hat we wear as legal support staff, they do not train us on the hat we wear as notaries. Employers assume that the needed training is provided by the State. To become a notary, we read one publication and take one test and then pay a periodic fee to stay current. Payment of a fee does not equal knowledge.

As our work duties change, so do our areas of focus as notaries. When a staff member moves on to a new job, they will undoubtedly face different notary-related questions. Periodic training would allow the notary to focus on aspects of notarization that perhaps were irrelevant in a prior job. Maybe that staff member moves on to work in an international law office and needs to focus on the types of identification they can accept, the technology for distance notarization, etc., aspects that perhaps when they were only notarizing in-house affidavits, they didn't need to know.

The pandemic too brought change in the notary world, with electronic notarization and remote online notarization building on the traditional in-person mode. While the basic functions of notarization remained, focus is required in our approach and aspects to check in our notarial acts under these new modalities. Periodic trainings would allow us to zero in on those new aspects of notarization.

I support HB 4020 because notaries are commissioned by the State to be precise, knowledgeable, and ethical impartial witnesses, impacting very important documents for the public. To be able to do the job well, we need to stay on top of our skills and be able to grow with the changes. Required periodic training will prompt us to remain in the know.

Thank you very much for allowing me to share my perspective and my support for HB4020.

Sincerely,

*Nancy S. Koppy*