



**House Committee on Early Childhood & Human Services
Oregon Farm Bureau Support for HB 2976
March 18, 2025**

Chair Hartman, Vice-Chair Scharf, Vice-Chair Nguyen, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 2976. Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) is the state's most inclusive agriculture organization, proudly representing over 6500 family farms and ranches that produce more than 220 agricultural commodities. From hops and hazelnuts to cattle, cranberries, and timber with operations spanning from just a few acres to thousands, our members utilize all farming methods including organic, conventional, regenerative, biotech, and even no-tech.

Many of the workers our farms employ have limited English proficiency and speak an Indigenous language from present-day Mexico, Central, or South America as their primary language. Worker health is essential for productivity, and it can be challenging to find and access Indigenous language interpretation when our workers need assistance.

Several state entities require interpreters to be credentialed to provide services. In order to earn credentials, interpreters must demonstrate that they are qualified. The most efficient way to prove language proficiency is by passing an evaluation. Such evaluations do not exist for Indigenous languages from present-day Mexico, Central, and South America, making it challenging for interpreters to earn their credentials and for providers to access interpretation services.

HB 2976 would provide funding for the development of three language proficiency evaluations for some of the most commonly spoken Indigenous languages in the state. It would also dedicate resources for the recruitment and retention of a qualified workforce and coordination of appointments.

Over the past few years, farm employers have elevated a concern about their workforce accessing health care, DMV services, and other public services, due to language barriers. Our members support HB 2976, as they increasingly see the need for interpreter services. HB 2976 eliminates some barriers to interpretation services and will allow employers to better communicate with and support our workforce.

This bill is helpful to farmers and our workers alike. OFB urges your support of HB 2976.