



**OREGON
WORKER
RELIEF**



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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 2976.

Oregon Worker Relief is a statewide network of community-based organizations striving to solve the exclusionary impacts our community faces by providing support to immigrants and refugees in Oregon and building systems that support prosperity for all. We believe that by ensuring everyone has access to basic rights and protections, we build stronger communities where all Oregon families can thrive.

There are over 50,000 Oregonians who are Indigenous to present-day Mexico, Central, and South America. Many only speak an Indigenous language from these regions. But just like other Oregonians, they sometimes need assistance accessing key services like healthcare or getting a driver's license.

Indigenous language speakers face significant barriers in accessing these types of services. With limited exception, some state entities require interpreters to be credentialed in order to provide services. To earn a credential, interpreters must demonstrate that they are qualified. In order to demonstrate qualifications, interpreters often must pass a language proficiency evaluation. Such evaluations do not exist for Indigenous languages from these regions. This makes it incredibly challenging for an Indigenous language speaker to get the services that they need.

HB 2976 would appropriate funds for the development of language proficiency evaluations for several of the most commonly spoken Indigenous languages from these regions. Funding would also be used to recruit and retain a qualified workforce, and to coordinate appointments across a variety of entities.

This bill will reduce language access gaps and ensure that all Oregonians can understand and be understood.

We urge your support of this important request.

Sincerely,

Adriana Sandoval
OWR Executive Committee Member