



Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council

March 18, 2025

Chair Hartman, Vice-Chairs Nguyen and Scharf, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB 2976, which will reduce language access gaps and ensure that all Oregonians can understand and be understood.**

My name is Alberto Gallegos and I am providing testimony on behalf of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Oregon. SEIU Oregon is composed of SEIU Local 503 and SEIU Local 49, which together represent over 87,000 people. Local 49 represents private sector janitors, property service workers, light manufacturing, and healthcare workers; while Local 503 represents homecare workers, private nonprofit workers, in-home childcare providers, nursing home workers, and state and local government employees.

Everyone in Oregon deserves to be heard and understood—especially workers who provide critical services in healthcare, social services, and beyond. Unfortunately, this is not the reality for more than 50,000 Oregonians who speak Indigenous languages from present-day Mexico, Central, and South America. These individuals face significant barriers due to a lack of qualified interpreters, leaving them vulnerable when trying to access essential services.

Currently, many state agencies require interpreters to obtain credentials, but Indigenous language interpreters often face exclusion due to the absence of proficiency exams in their languages. This lack of access disproportionately impacts low-income communities, immigrants, and workers, making it harder for them to navigate healthcare, legal systems, and other essential services.

HB 2976 would invest in developing language proficiency assessments, recruiting and retaining a qualified interpreter workforce, and improving coordination of interpretation services across agencies. By addressing these gaps, the bill would not only empower vulnerable communities but also ensure that workers providing interpretation services receive the training, support, and recognition they deserve.

No one should face language barriers when seeking emergency medical care, legal assistance, or other essential services—especially workers and families who contribute so much to our communities.

SEIU Oregon urges the Committee to support HB 2976.

Thank you,

Oregon State Council



Stronger Together

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Alberto Gallegos
Political and Government Relations Organizer
SEIU Oregon State Council