

Testimony of Rosa Pham on Senate Bill 698
March 6, 2019

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson, Vice Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rosa Pham and I am a Family Nurse Practitioner. I want to thank you all for allowing me to testify today in support of Senate Bill 698. This important bill will allow Oregonians with limited English proficiency to read and understand the medications prescribed to them in their preferred language.

As a healthcare provider, I see firsthand how having a language barrier affects a patient's understanding of their health and how they manage their health. I have been a nurse for 5 years and have discharged many patients from the hospital. When it comes to discharging education, my responsibility is to make sure patients understand their diagnosis, when to follow up, and how to take their medications. I would like to share a story about a Spanish-speaking patient I encountered a month ago (I will call him Daniel). To ensure Daniel could understand his discharge instructions, I used a video remote interpreter to provide Spanish translation. In front of Daniel and I were about 8 medication bottles. There were a few new ones delivered by the pharmacy and then there were a few old ones that Daniel had brought in to the hospital. I explained to Daniel which medications to stop taking. I watched as he took his pen and scribbled on the ones he was not supposed to take anymore. I explained to him how and when to take the new medications, and side effects of taking the medications. Again, I watched as his family and he scribbled on the medication bottles and the discharge papers I had printed. After an hour of going over his discharge instructions, he was discharged home.

A study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine in 2012 found that about 50% of patients discharged home from the hospital makes medication error and about a quarter of those errors results in serious outcomes. During the discharge process, a lot of information is given to patients. Patients fluent in English can have difficulty understanding their health care regimen. Can you imagine how much more difficult it will be for a patient with a language barrier to not be able to read their own prescription bottles? I never knew what happened to Daniel. I can only hope he was able to read his "notes" when he got home and remember how to take his medications.

There is a way to help reduce medication errors for patients with limited English proficiency. With your approval of SB 698, patients will be able to understand their prescription medication labels and safely manage their health

Sincerely,

Rosa Pham, MN, FNP-BC