

February 6, 2020

CHAIR SALINAS AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE,

Thank you for the opportunity to put in a letter of support on HB 4115. We are pleased to provide the following letter.

The health care interpreter (HCI) is an essential part of the medical team. Interpreters offer a language and cultural bridge between a health care professional (like a doctor, nurse, dentist, etc.) and a limited English proficient (LEP) patient. This ensures the proper communication that allows for the LEP patient to receive quality medical care.

HB 4115 is an important step for furthering the health care interpreting profession. This bill will set a program with the Oregon Health Authority **where licensure and certification ensure that interpreters do not abuse Deaf culture and their needs such as flat rate interpreting costs to prevent health care provider choosing an interpreter over another leaving Deaf/HH patient conflict of interest with an interpreter** and that would require health care providers, including coordinated care organizations, and companies providing health care interpreters to health care providers to use health care interpreters who are qualified or certified by Oregon Health Authority.

With the additional fortification of this paragraph and the next paragraph, Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Deaf/HH) patients retrieve utmost qualified medical interpreter in their language, American Sign Language (ASL), without any harm to their confidentiality, health, and relationship and trust between Deaf/HH patients and health care providers. Deaf/HH patients also suffer power control by interpreting agency due to contracts between health care providers and interpreting agency. In addition, Deaf/HH patients suffer social, emotional, and mental abuse from interpreters who claimed to be qualified as a medical interpreter as well as having health care provider choosing an interpreter over another due to attractive costs, i.e. Interpreter A rated at \$20 an hour compared to Interpreter B rated at \$60 an hour.

I lost my primary care provider because of an interpreter's power to control contracts with health care providers. This limits Deaf/HH patients' choices to their preferred and trusted interpreters. It is my hope that this HB4115 will prevent this from happening again. It is also my hope that HB4115 gets to be reviewed carefully to reflect prohibition of power control between health care providers and medical interpreters/interpreting agencies as well the prohibition of cost competition.

My views on this bill as a much welcomed step to professionalize Oregon's Health Care Interpreting. This bill will benefit both urban and rural communities in Oregon and will allow our services to be utilized throughout the state.

We thank Chair Salinas for her continued work on this bill.

Thank you for your time- I am happy to answer any questions.

Rebecca Funk, M.Ed