

Chair Andrea Salinas
House Health Care Committee
Testimony in support of HB 4115

February 6, 2020

CHAIR SALINAS AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE,

Chair Salinas and members of the committee, in the interest of time, I have submitted our written comments for the record and will just quickly highlight a few important points from our testimony. Thank you for the opportunity to put in a letter of support and testimony on HB 4115.

My name is Maria Michalczyk and I am pleased to see the progress that has been made in Oregon for the Health Care Interpreting profession. In 2001 I had the honor to work with Senator Avel Gordly in creating and passing Senate Bill 790 and was thrilled that Governor Kitzhaber signed the bill into law that same year. While the law was just the “starter” for our state an update occurred in 2015 with HB 2419 to further strengthen the original law of 2001.

A certified and/or qualified health care interpreter is critical to our patients who require interpreter services. Quality care cannot be rendered if communication is poor between the patient and provider and as such the dynamic of communication becomes more complex when an interpreter is required. In my years as a Registered Nurse and working with health care interpreters since 1992, I have seen many grave errors occur due to misinterpretation. The person interpreting may not realize a mistake has even happened but with training and education the interpreter can more fully realize when an error may have occurred and quickly correct the error. Misinterpretations have real consequences, from a true lack of understanding of one’s own health care, taking the wrong dose of medication or signing a consent for the wrong surgery. We are trying to level the playing field and ensuring that health care providers and patients are getting appropriate and culturally competent interpretation, especially in languages of lesser diffusion. By setting a baseline (i.e. qualified/certified), this ensures health care providers can trust that the interpreter assigned to their patient is competent and is providing the highest level of care by accurately interpreting complex medical terminology.

The Oregon Health Care Interpreters Association (OHCIA) is a non-profit that trains and supports interpreters throughout the state of Oregon. The health care interpreter (HCI) is an essential part of the medical team. Interpreters offer a language and culture 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 our field. This bill will set a program with the Oregon Health Authority 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.

Our association welcomes the opportunity to be part of Oregon's health care field and we see this bill as a much welcome step to professionalize our industry. This bill will benefit both urban and rural communities in Oregon and will allow our services to be utilized throughout the state.

Interpreters are crucial to the success of a care team. As the association, we are committed to working with interpreters across the state to make them aware of this requirement and provide the necessary training.

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

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



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Oregon Health Care Interpreters Association (OHCIA)

