



Columbia

LANGUAGE SERVICES

Testimony Opposing House Bill 4115
February 6, 2019
House Committee on Health Care
Svetlana Linchuk

Dear Chair Salinas, Vices Chari Nosse and Hayden, and members of the Committee,

My name is Svetlana Linchuk, and I have been an active member of the interpreting industry for nearly 30 years. I began interpreting in 1991, received my first certification in 1993, and founded the interpreting agency Columbia language Services in 1994. My certifications include medical, social services and written translations which I received from Washington State.

This letter is written in opposition to HB 4115 as it is currently written.

We have, and currently are working with Washington state contracts since 1995. We have gone through all of the changes with Washington State and managed to make it out the other side. Some changes were great for the industry, while others were quite damaging. Looking at HB 4115, I can see a lot of similarities, which in fact, are nearly identical to the changes that passed in Washington State.

While I agree with the fact that interpreter rates are not up to the level that we would consider a fair compensation, and that interpreter certifications should be standardized and required, especially in the medical fields, I strongly disagree with Section 5(2)(d) using a single entity for the entire state for interpreter service access monopolizing the industry which would take away the ability of choice not only from the medical providers, but also from the interpreters to choose which agency they are able to work for.

When there a monopoly, it becomes the only choice you have, so there is nothing to compare it to. I witnessed it firsthand in the soviet system. The failures of the system it created, where considered to be the norm. Any centralized systems which have no other options to choose will create inherent failures into the system. In other words, if there is no back up, or no other option, the second option becomes no option. Without healthy competition there becomes no motivation to provide better services and the quality as well as availability degrades.

Awarding the contract to more than one agency would promote competition to provide better service under the same rules and state regulations, as well as provide the ability of choice for providers and interpreters. This would also create a failsafe if one of the agencies assigned was unable to service the contract.

I came to the United States 30 years ago from the former Soviet Union as a refugee, with 3 children and next to nothing. America provides choice and freedom which prevents the abuse of power in monopolization. I am proud to be an American citizen and have faith in capitalism and the democratic way of our government.

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