

Chair Patterson, Vice-chair Hayden, and members of the Committee,

My name is Sanjoy Dutt, I am an interpreter and I am writing to support bill SB 584.

After arriving in the United States, as an immigrant, I realized how difficult it was for non-English speakers to communicate, particularly when it has to do with their health outcomes, many of whom have lived terrible lives in refugee camps and possess many pre-existing health conditions.

Healthcare interested me, I needed work, wanted to help members of my community, and I spoke a few languages. I took the necessary interpreter training and became a medical interpreter.

The interpreter's life is precarious, volatile, and uncertain. There are no job guarantees, inadequate wages, increasing transport costs, no health insurance, and no sick leave. Furthermore, the high costs of continuing education, as well as vaccines and tests to stay accredited and compliant. Plus, regular bills and year-end taxes. This forces many interpreters to move away from the precarious profession towards stability.

Some language companies insist bilinguals be permitted to interpret in medical sessions as there is a shortage of accredited interpreters. That's because they can pay bilinguals even less and make more profit. Language companies had frequently used non-accredited interpreters over state-accredited interpreters in the past and that has not stopped even today. Middlemen will mask transparency for their own gain. Today even accredited interpreters do not make half of what language companies make by selling their services.

I support SB 584, which emphasizes an online portal where interpreters can collectively lay down their rates. This will ensure our vulnerable Medicaid/ OHP patients get quality language access. Service providers can reach out directly to interpreters through the portal, which eliminates linguistic brokers and saves valuable public funds. If Washington could do it, we can too.

Creating a portal takes time, but it should not be a pretext for delaying the eradication of intermediaries, saving public money, and letting interpreters set their own tariffs. There are a lot of unbiased interpretation portals that work with technical support that can be used in the meantime.

I urge you to say yes to SB 584.

Thank you