

2.9.2023

The Honorable Rev. Dr. Deb Patterson
Chair, Oregon State Senate Committee on Health Care

The Honorable Cedric Hayden
Vice Chair, Oregon State Senate Committee on Health Care

Dear Senator Patterson and Senator Hayden,

I would like to share why I believe SB 584 will further restrict language access and ultimately lead to more health disparities for our diverse communities here in the state of Oregon.

I would like to emphasize that Linguava provides comprehensive support to the health care interpreters that partner with us. This includes financial aid for scholarship programs and hospital compliance requirements, as well as scholarships to help offset the cost of obtaining Oregon certification/qualification. We also have a compliance team that invests time in guiding interpreters through the entire process.

I would also like to highlight that the availability of interpreters on the registry for encounters in Oregon is alarmingly limited, with only 36 languages represented, and less than 3% of all encounters being serviced by interpreters listed on the OHA registry. Of the 36 languages, many languages only have 1 or 2 credentialed interpreters in the whole state, like Hmong and Hindi with only one, Korean with only 4 cert, Chuukese with only 5... and more than 100 languages with zero Oregon credentialed resources. This is a significant challenge for the state's linguistically diverse communities, particularly for marginalized and rural populations, who rely on remote interpreting to access crucial healthcare services.

SB 584 will have unintended consequences for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf Blind and Deaf Disabled patients, limiting their ability to choose their preferred interpreters, and creating a lack of continuity in services which could directly impact the health and well-being of the patient. Selection of interpreters for appointments requiring sign language requires extensive knowledge of and experience with placement of interpreters for the Deaf community to ensure the best possible communication access.

The use of an Oregon state-run scheduling platform for interpreting services would further restrict and delay language access, leading to a decline in health outcomes for already disadvantaged communities. For these reasons I vote to oppose SB 584.

Respectfully,

David Brackett
OHA certified health care interpreter # 010322
Linguava