

Submitter: Jessica DeGross  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care  
Measure: SB584

Dear Senator Patterson and Senator Hayden,

My name is Jessica DeGross, and I am an Oregon-based healthcare interpreter in French. I write to oppose Oregon Senate Bill 584. This bill would require the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to develop a web-based platform to support the scheduling and payment of interpreters for language access for Oregonian healthcare patients, essentially replacing many of the language service providers (LSPs) that currently service Oregon patients and employ interpreters like me.

I oppose this bill because replacing LSPs would unintentionally result in the loss of the following benefits for many interpreters like myself:

- Loss of Liability Protection – In order to participate in medical translation, interpreters like myself assume risk. LSPs help mitigate that risk and provide protection via the service providers' insurance policies and comprehensive credentialing procedures. Navigating these complexities can be daunting for individual interpreters.
- Loss of Education and Career Advancement – LSPs typically provide high-quality training and educational resources that are foundational in advancing interpreter careers and expertise at no cost or at a drastically reduced cost to the interpreter.
- Loss of Consistency of Income – Instead of being able to interpret for several LSPs, I will be dependent on one client (the OHA) to provide all my assignments in Oregon. As a result, it would also seem that I would be dependent on OHA to set my compensation rates, though the bill's current language does not account for this.
- Loss of ability to work remotely – The current bill does not appear to support remote interpretation in any form. Remote work provides the kind of flexibility that allows some interpreters to work when they would otherwise be could not.

This bill's intent appears to be improving working conditions for Oregon-based medical interpreters. As it is written, bill 584 only supports interpreters who happen to do contract-based, on-site work exclusively. The bill actively impedes all other medical interpreters.

As such, bill 584 fails to fulfill its purpose, and merits the opposition of all those who fight for health equity, language access, and better working conditions for all medical interpreters in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Jessica DeGross