

Submitter: Mahdi Seifian

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care

Measure: SB584

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,

My name is Mahdi Seifian, and I am an Oregon-based healthcare interpreter in Persian (Farsi). 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 health care patients. I oppose this bill because it threatens to make my life as an independent contractor much more difficult.

Nationally, more than 80% of interpreters and translators work as Independent Contractors (ICs). As an IC, I set my hours – I can accept or refuse assignments according to my schedule. This is an enormous advantage to those of us who have child or eldercare responsibilities, for example. I set my rates and can negotiate rates with my clients. For each of the companies I work with, I had to demonstrate my skills and qualifications, including taking their tests, which in many cases are harder than the national certification tests offered in health care by CCHI and IMIA. I am a State Qualified Health Care Interpreter working from home as an Over-the-phone interpreter. I do provide interpreting services for Limited English Speaking People for a language of lesser diffusion in Oregon and in other states nationwide.

Having the Oregon Health Authority replace the many language companies working in Oregon will make my life more challenging. Instead of being on the “rolodex” of several companies, which makes it possible to fill my schedule out, I will be dependent on one client to provide assignments in Oregon. The bill also does not clarify how rates will be set, or who sets them.

Language access in health care in Oregon could be improved, but this bill isn’t the way to do it.

Respectfully,

Mahdi Seifian