

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden and members of the committee,

My name is Robin Fouche. I am the Client Relations Manager at Linguava Interpreters. Linguava serves hospitals, CCOs, and healthcare providers with responsive, professional language services and I have the pleasure of working with healthcare providers and interpreters daily. Every request for an interpreter in our portal represents a human being who, without a professional interpreter, would not have equitable access to health care.

I'm proud of the work Linguava does supporting patients' language access needs. Some testimony in support of the proposed legislation described Language Service Organizations as intermediaries or middlemen who perform little more than acting as a scheduling service. I can assure everyone that we provide much more than that. Here are just a few.

Skills assessments: Every interpreter, whether they are on the OHA registry or not must pass our assessment to demonstrate their abilities. There are interpreters on the OHA registry who were not employed by Linguava because they could not pass the assessment.

Organizational Oversight: Our interpreter relations team maintains files on every interpreter with Linguava and updates their documentation. If an interpreter does not provide updated proof of Certification or Qualification that designation is removed from their profile and they will have fewer assignments available to them. Our scheduling team is required to reach out to OHA credentialed interpreters first. Last month over 70% of our onsite interpreter encounters were with OHA Qualified/Certified interpreters.

Quality Assurance: the QA department records all interpreter no-shows, late arrivals, provider and patient complaints. This department along with interpreter relations works with interpreters, providing coaching and additional training as needed and when necessary, in extreme cases to terminate our relationship. Our QA department also takes interpreter feedback about providers, patients, and staff seriously and when interpreters report issues to us we in turn work with our clients to appropriately address the interpreters' concerns.

Compliance Navigation: Not only do we serve our clients in compliance with OHA, HIPAA, and CMS, but we also work with organizations that have other requirements before allowing interpreters onsite such as regular drug screening and vaccinations. Our team compiles and tracks all of those documents as well as interpreter HIPAA and Fraud, Waste, and Abuse training completion certificates, and government exclusion checks.

Interpreter Assistance: We began working with interpreters in 2021 to support their achieving OHA certification or qualification. We provided a free help-desk where they could meet with our team to determine their individual path to certification, partnered with CCOs to offer scholarships, and provided our own scholarships. Our company also provided groceries and PPE during the shutdown phases of the pandemic when onsite work evaporated. Staff and interpreters in need could come to the office and pick up the resources they required.

Sub-contract and Full-Time Employment: Linguava also has full-time staff interpreter positions for OHA credentialed interpreters which offer full benefits such as health, vision, and dental insurance, paid

holidays, PTO, 401 K, etc. We've found that most interpreters still prefer to work independently and have control of their schedules and we respect that and continue to offer subcontract roles as well. We also have a self-assign capability for qualified and Certified interpreter so they are already able to do what this legislation is proposing, allow them to choose their appointments, submit their forms electronically, and get paid by direct deposit.

As you can see, there is much more involved in getting Qualified and Certified interpreters to appointments than simply putting a request in a portal. We assure that our healthcare providers receive interpreters who are not only compliant with federal and state regulations, but also are compliant with individual organizational requirements, provide oversight on quality standards, and supply them and OHA with the required reports on a regular basis.

Additionally, the proposed scheduling system will only be for OHA credentialed onsite interpreters, so many languages will have no interpreters represented at all. Last month Linguava interpreters attended appointments with patients in over 100 languages. This proposed legislation may be helpful to a small, vocal group of onsite interpreters in the dominant languages but will ultimately cause harm to a large number of patients and interpreters. It will limit access to groups who are already battling with resource disparities.

Linguava is not alone in what we provide for interpreters, clients, CCOs, and regulatory bodies. Our colleagues throughout Oregon and around the country have spent decades in the industry, growing with the times, building technology, strengthening the workforce, advocating for clients and interpreters, and most importantly, playing an integral part in providing equitable access to health care through language interpretation and translation.

Without the organizational oversight provided by language service providers it will become the state's responsibility to maintain compliance records for all interpreters, maintain compliance requirements for all healthcare systems, address quality issues, navigate CMS and provider audits, and provide data reports for all stakeholders. I know that if SB 584 passes it will not raise the level of care that patients receive, and it will not lower costs for the state or for healthcare providers.

For these reasons I urge you to vote against SB 584

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Fouche