

Thursday, February 16, 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 am an interpreter for my parents but also am an employee that works for a Language Service Company based here in Oregon. This letter is to express my strong opposition to Oregon Senate Bill 584, on behalf of myself and the company I work for. Unfortunately, this bill holds several unintended consequences that would negatively impact Oregonian patients, including my parents.

My parents came to Oregon as refugees fleeing the killing fields of Cambodia. Due to the language barrier, I was interpreting for my parents from a young age. I also interpreted and translated information for other Cambodian families. When I had the opportunity to work for a language service provider, I knew that this was the place for me. I could relate to the company's mission and vision statement. The company that I work for provides 100% company-paid medical, dental, and vision coverage to its direct full-time employees. As an HR professional in the field for 20 years, this is the 1st company that I have been with that does this. I heard testimony about interpreters not getting the opportunity to have benefits. However, there are interpreters that elect to be contractors, and these are the ones that don't qualify for benefits. Since I have been with the company, we have had full-time direct employees who are interpreters give up their benefits by resigning to become contractors because the reason they provide for leaving is flexibility. They can choose if they want to work or not...

In addition, on January 18, 2023, my father was taken to the ER and eventually diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer, and I was the point of contact for the doctors/nurses that were caring for him. He was in the ER, ICU, Family Medicine, and currently in the Oncology Unit, and each one dealt with his limited English differently by utilizing me or utilizing Video Relay Interpretation (VRI). When using VRI, these Cambodian/Khmer interpreters weren't based in Oregon but throughout the United States. I have yet to be in contact with a Cambodian/Khmer interpreter that resides in Oregon that has interpreted for my dad. This highlights the need for a national base, not a state base of interpreters to meet the linguistic needs of **ALL** Limited English Proficient patients.

I respectfully urge you to reconsider the provisions of this bill and to engage with stakeholders in the language industry and the patients, and their families to find a solution that adequately supports the linguistic needs of Oregonian patients and the industry as a whole.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kyra Oslund".

Kyra Oslund