

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

My name is Denia Marquez I am a national and state certified medical interpreter working as a contractor since 2019 in the Portland Oregon metro area. I support the Bill SB 584 because the LEP community has the right to equality in the healthcare system and that starts with the compliance of the law that requires certified and qualified interpreters. I met new patients every day and I understand their frustration when they share their bad experiences with untrained interpreters and how those encounters have created confusion and delays in their medical treatments as well the healthcare workers who after many years of working with interpreters are able to recognize and be thankful when they have the luck of working with a certified interpreter. Being an interpreter in Oregon has many challenges, since the beginning I have experienced I lack of transparency from the agencies that subcontract my services in multiple aspects as pay rates, hours of work offered and negotiation to increase my rate according to competitive rates between other agencies for example depending on the agency the rate is different for the same patient, on the same date, for the same clinic and same healthcare insurance.

We as interpreters don't have any warranty in amount of hours of work or even respect for the job assignments we can get, sometimes we have been offered and accepted an appointment and that can disappear from our schedules without any explanation from the agencies. I have never been explained any criteria protocol or procedure of how the appointments are assign to a specific interpreter. I am a General Surgeon graduated in Honduras and due that strong medical background I started to work as a medical interpreter to use my experience to help LEP patients, while I was obtaining the requisites of OHA in professional training to become a certified medical interpreter, I was working for many hours at the lowest rate for the agency without being ask if I was the right candidate for those appointments. After I pass the national test for certification and enter the list of Certified Health Care Interpreters the OHA and my rate increased following many months of negotiations to the standard for certified interpreters, I was never again offered the same amount of hours of work or the same type of appointments. I have since then accepted appointments that are never confirmed, received emails by agencies offering that all appointments are going to be offered in online portals and never happened, one day they offer to increased your amount of hours and the next they tell you it's only temporary or only for interpreters with a title of "favorite" by the agency.

The pass of this bill and the construction of the portal will help interpreters collectively set their rates and add transparency measures, focus on Medicaid/ OHP Patients who are some of our most vulnerable Oregonians and are in great need of professional certified reliably interpretation services. Build towards Oregon's Health Equity goals by providing quality language access, which is mandated by federal law for entities receiving federal funding. Save providers money by allowing them to directly contract with interpreters instead of going through a third party. Ensure that the state is tracking where federal and state dollars are being spent wisely and establish a Healthcare Interpreter Retention Fund to keep interpreters in the profession with better working conditions. I urge the committee to vote YES on SB 584

Denia Marquez
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