

SB 1578 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Health Care

Action Date: 02/14/24

Action: Do pass with amendments. Refer to Ways and Means by prior reference. (Printed A-Eng).

Vote: 3-2-0-0

Yeas: 3 - Campos, Gorsek, Patterson

Nays: 2 - Bonham, Hayden

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

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Meeting Dates: 2/7, 2/12, 2/14

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure directs the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to contract with a nonprofit to establish and maintain a management system to schedule appointments and process billing for health care interpreters.

Detailed Summary:

Directs OHA to contract with a nonprofit to administer a management system for health care providers to schedule directly with qualified interpreters and process billing for services. Allows the nonprofit to contract with a vendor for a software system. Directs the nonprofit to develop plans to recruit, train, and provide professional development to interpreters. Allows the nonprofit to contract directly with interpreters to fill last-minute slots. Requires the nonprofit to report annually to OHA, including the amount of money applied to interpreter recruitment and training. Directs OHA to take all steps necessary to secure federal funds for interpretation services provided to Oregon Health Plan members.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Existing model for interpreter management
- Process for selection of nonprofit
- Duties of nonprofit

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Clarifies the definition of "nonprofit" for purposes of the measure and specifies different responsibilities for OHA and the nonprofit entity.

BACKGROUND:

Health care interpreters facilitate communication between health care providers and patients with limited English proficiency and the deaf and hard of hearing. The U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) estimates that in the State of Oregon there are 216,654 people who speak English less than very well, about 5.5 percent of the population ([Link to LPRO Map of Oregon LEP Population](#)).

Oregon's Health Care Workforce Needs Assessment (2023) discusses the status of Oregon's health care interpreter workforce along with future needs ([link](#) to report; see page 59). Interpreters must complete a training program approved by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to become qualified or certified ([link](#) to OHA Health Care Interpreter Program). The Oregon Council on Health Care Interpreters (OCHCI) advises OHA on administrative rules and policy standards ([link](#) to OCHCI). For Oregon Health Plan members with limited English proficiency, interpretation may be provided by certified or qualified interpreters who work for agencies that contract with Coordinated Care Organizations.