



February 05, 2024

To: Senate Committee on Health Care

From: Emerson Hamlin, Political Organizer, Oregon Nurses Association

Re: Support for SB 1578

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). ONA is a nurses union and professional association representing over 17,000 health care workers and providers, including registered nurses, advanced practice nurses, and allied health workers. Our members work in urban and rural hospitals, clinics, school-based health centers, home health, and county health departments across Oregon.

Nurses, along with all other healthcare providers need to be able to communicate with their patients and their patient's family to provide appropriate care. Without a translator, details on the patient's condition, follow up appointments, and medication instructions are easily lost. This all impacts the patient's health: research shows that patients with limited English proficiency experience high rates of medical errors, and worse clinical outcomes than patients who speak English proficiently.¹ Our nurses want to provide the best possible patient care for every patient; translators are key partners in this work.

Furthermore, language access is a key element of health equity. The Oregon Health Authority is striving to eliminate health inequities in Oregon by 2030, and has set metrics for CCOs to measure the provision of quality interpreter services. While these steps are laudable, Oregon's interpreters are sharing that they face considerable barriers in their work, including low pay, lack of compensation for travel time, and complicated contracting processes.

SB 1578 will reduce these barriers by creating an easy way for interpreters to be booked and paid directly by the state, rather than having to go through intermediaries for payment. Passing this bill is good for the workforce, patients across Oregon, and will move us closer to health equity. Thank you for considering this comments. ONA urges your support of SB 1578.

Sincerely,

Emerson Hamlin

Political Organizer, Oregon Nurses Association

¹ Green, A.R and Nze, C AMA J Ethics. 2017;19(3):263-271

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ONA is an affiliate of the American Nurses Association, AFT and AFL-CIO