

To: Senate Committee on Health Care  
From: Ayman Ghazi, Oregon Interpreters in Action  
Re: Support for Statewide Health Care Interpreter Portal

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and members of the Committee,

I am Ayman Ghazi, and I have been an Arabic interpreter for almost seven years. I chose to go into health care interpreting because it is a challenging and rewarding job. I feel content and happy when I see that patients feel understood. I can give patients the help they need to express what they feel and think to their medical providers, which sometimes takes a little more effort than just translating what they're saying.

I once worked with a patient on a follow-up appointment with his doctor, and according to the symptoms presented by the previous interpreter, the doctor thought he had colon cancer and chronic liver disease. After our appointment, he realized that the patient in fact only had a bit of fatty liver and needed a colonoscopy. These situations cause unnecessary stress on patients and unnecessary testing and follow-up care, and they can be avoided.

Being a health care interpreter is not well paid, and it's even worse because language companies take a lot of our earnings. We travel every day without any compensation for the time or gas, we don't get paid extra when we take appointments on holidays or after hours in emergency situations. We have to renew our credentials frequently, which takes time and money. We need help to make this job worthwhile.

If our payment rate was set according to state law, and there was a unified system that would make it easier for us to get appointments and be paid, we would be much more secure in our jobs.