

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

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

My name is Tolú Tahmassbi, and I have been a Spanish language interpreter since 1996. I decided to use my skills to become a health care interpreter because I am familiar with the medical terminology and vernacular plus I enjoy working for people that are in need of interpretation for their basic needs. Being able to provide peace of mind and security to people who are in need of my services is rewarding and uplifting, and it gives me a sense of purpose.

Right now, there appears to be not enough work for certified health care interpreters because interpreting agencies get to pick the jobs that they give to you. Which means that jobs go to the interpreters who cost the least, because agencies want to make money. This does not give people who need interpretation services the best quality of care, because not every interpreter has a high level of skills and interpretation abilities in the medical field specifically. Also, even if a clinic wants to use my services specifically, they cannot since they have to go through the interpretation agency that the insurance company has a contract with.

Some of my clients are obligated to use interpretation agencies that have contracts with state insurance, even if they want to use me for all of their appointments. they cannot because the insurance company does not allow for payment outside of their contracted agencies. If we could create a system that allows providers to contract with me directly, they would be able to provide high-quality health care interpretation to all of their patients, which should be the goal of all language access initiatives.

Please support a statewide health care interpreter portal so that I can support myself while doing work that helps patients get the care they need.