

February 7, 2024

To: Senate Committee on Health Care

From: Maria Michalczyk, MA, RN, Private Citizen

Re: Support for SB 1578

Thank you for the opportunity to support SB 1578. As a healthcare professional with over 50 years of experience and 30 years of working with interpreters, I've seen the health care interpreter profession grow and thrive but also recognize the need for more intense support. The current system makes it difficult for interpreters to navigate, earn a decent wage and direct good working conditions. Additionally, Oregon lacks a robust system to track interpreter encounters, leading to poor data collection and consequently weak policy decisions. This paucity of data not only impacts interpreters but also the people they serve such as limited English-speaking patients and direct health care providers. I believe SB 1578 is a step in the right direction, but we need inclusive discussions with stakeholders to create a system that works to improve the overall operations of healthcare interpreting. We need accurate data to support interpreters and improve positive outcomes for limited English-speaking patients.

In conclusion, this bill marks a significant starting point for enhancing healthcare interpreting systems. However, I emphasize that achieving meaningful progress will require a methodical approach and a long-term commitment to review, discuss and collaborate. Let's work together to create a system that builds on the work of many and provides a structure that will assist in helping patients, providers, language service providers, health care organizations and health care interpreters in delivering improved outcomes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maria Michalczyk, MA, RN". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'M'.

Maria Michalczyk

