

Submitter: Kathryn J  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care  
Measure: SB1578

Hello and thank you for reading my point of view on this bill!

I am an interpreter who was born and raised in an LEP household and I am deeply concerned about language access for LEP and Deaf/HoH patients. I also provide remote interpreting services to several states, one of the biggest being Oregon.

From that point of view, I strongly oppose HB 1578.

First of all, I do not believe this entire proposal is putting the concerns of LEP patients first – I believe the portal would end up hurting and limiting language access for LEP patients.

This bill comes from a small group of local, short-sighted, in-person, self-serving individuals who have no clue about the bigger picture, and what it takes to provide language services to the entire state, not just Portland! Sadly, I've seen a few of these union types over my many years and they tend to do more to disrupt and add obstacles rather than to create pathways to access.

With all due respect, I don't believe the state of Oregon is equipped to take on this immense responsibility. It is simply NOT feasible, as the state does not have the resources, expertise, or infrastructure to coordinate interpreting services effectively. The state would also be wise to consider if it should take on the federal liability for providing language access for the entire state.

Another important factor to consider is the significant financial burden for the state to oversee a portal. Could this lead to a lack of funding for other important healthcare initiatives?

Due to the lack of expertise or experience in this realm, the management of the portal would be outsourced to a non-profit, what kind of experience or competence in running such a system will be required? Without this experience and expertise, it could lead to a lack of oversight and accountability.

Most people have no clue that the number of languages represented in the current OHA registry is a fraction of the languages served by remote interpreting. The portal would be a roadblock to finding needed interpreters and I am very concerned this would delay healthcare for LEP patients.

As an interpreter who has worked in the industry for over 30 years and worked with many language service companies, I receive a lot of benefits from those entities that would be erased if the state took it over: regular work, access to training, consistent payment, professional support and liability protection. These agencies have worked for years to build the trust of the interpreting community and the clients they serve. This bill is taking away their livelihood but more importantly, their much-needed expertise and services. (I'm not an agency owner)

I also think healthcare providers will be handicapped in their ability to find on-demand remote interpreter services. By the way, the vast majority of interpreter services are

provided remotely, not in person, and the portal could lead to a lack of available interpreters and this portal doesn't even address that important modality!

My last point is that in practical terms, I think this bill violates an LEP patient's federal civil rights because it will do the opposite of its intent and will limit the ability to access qualified interpreter services. This is frightening, horrifying, and completely unacceptable and goes against the principles of healthcare equity.

In summary, HB 1578 is ineffective in improving language access for LEP patients. I urge lawmakers to consider alternative solutions that improve patient access to qualified interpreter services. Thank you for reading and considering!!