

Submitter: Devon Lawson-McCourt
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB1578

As an advocate for a more inclusive and equitable healthcare system, I wholeheartedly support Senate Bill 1578, a progressive step towards ensuring all Oregonians, regardless of the language they speak, have equal access to healthcare services. In a society where healthcare is a fundamental right, it is imperative that we dismantle barriers to access, and language should not be an impediment to receiving quality medical care.

The Act's directive for the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to establish a health care interpreter management system is a commendable initiative. By leveraging technology through an online portal for scheduling and billing with healthcare interpreters, we are not only acknowledging the linguistic diversity of our state but also actively working towards inclusivity. This system will facilitate real-time access to interpreters, ensuring that non-English speaking patients can communicate effectively with healthcare providers, thereby improving the quality of care and patient outcomes.

Contracting with a nonprofit entity to manage this system is a strategic approach that aligns with our values of community-oriented solutions. Nonprofits, driven by mission rather than profit, are more likely to prioritize the needs of the community, ensuring that the system remains accessible and efficient. The requirement for annual reporting by the nonprofit to the OHA will ensure transparency and accountability, allowing for continuous improvement of the system based on the needs of the community.

Furthermore, the bill's criteria for the contracting nonprofit to meet specific standards ensures that the system will be managed by an entity that is capable and committed to enhancing language access in healthcare. This move not only supports non-English speaking patients but also empowers healthcare providers and coordinated care organizations by streamlining the process of accessing interpreter services.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 1578 represents a significant step forward in our pursuit of a more equitable healthcare system. By ensuring that all Oregonians, regardless of language, have equal access to healthcare, we are upholding the principles of social justice and equity. I urge all stakeholders to support this bill, recognizing it as an essential investment in the health and well-being of our diverse community. Together, we can build a healthcare system that truly serves everyone.

Sincerely,
Devon Lawson-McCourt