

To: Senate Committee on Health Care
From: Grace Enriquez, 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 Grace Enriquez, and I have been an English/Spanish healthcare interpreter for two years. At the clinic where I used to work, there was a huge demand for interpreting services and we were able to receive a pay differential, so I started interpreting. It is rewarding to know the difference I make in people's health and wellbeing

I believe that the health and well-being of everyone matters. This can be improved when everyone receives appropriate care, and language access is a key piece of that care. Without qualified interpreters, people cannot make informed decisions nor have appropriate follow up and this can have a negative impact on their health. Imagine not understanding your doctors recommendations on how to manage your chronic conditions or take your medicine - that would really make a difference in your health.

Once, an elderly male client shared his experience receiving a horrible interpretation service at a local hospital. The staff they used was not a qualified or certified interpreter but someone knew Spanish well enough to pass an exam. This person cursed a lot and used vulgar language while trying to explain what the doctor was saying, which made the patient uncomfortable and nervous.

This is why it's so important for interpreters to be trained and certified, so that all patients get access to respectful and professional interpreting services. But right now, low wages and inconsistent appointments make it really difficult to make it a "full-time job".

Interpreters cannot make a living and continue helping those in need without receiving just compensation. If we had a payment and scheduling portal that would allow us to get appointments and get paid directly, I'd be able to build trust with my clients and also be able to make enough money to take care of myself.