

To: Senate Committee on Health Care
From: Danche Swanson, 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 Danche Swanson, and I am a health care interpreter specializing in Macedonian, Bosnian/Serbo/Croatian, and Bulgarian. I decided to use my interpretation skills in the healthcare field, specifically, because I wanted to make a positive difference in the lives of people who face language barriers in accessing health care. Doing this work is rewarding and encouraging because I know I am helping people, but it is challenging to keep doing it for a variety of reasons.

The struggle to stay in the interpreting industry is due to low pay, difficulties renewing costly interpreter certifications, lack of accountability from language companies, and lack of health insurance while providing such essential health care services.

Language barriers can have a negative impact on the level of care that patients whose first language is not English receive. Some possible effects are: miscommunication which can lead to errors, delays, or complications in diagnosis, treatment, or follow-up; reduced access to healthcare services; lower quality of care and patient satisfaction.

Setting up a portal for us to be scheduled and paid directly through the state would make it much easier for us to provide our services to patients who need us. It would also promote recognition and respect for the interpreters' work, by acknowledging and valuing their contribution to the health care system and the non-English speaking communities, and by providing them with opportunities for professional development.