

To: Senate Committee on Health Care
From: Samnang Yun, 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 Samnang Yun, and I am a health care interpreter in Khmer/Cambodian. I became a health care interpreter because I wanted to help my Cambodian communities all over Oregon and Washington state. I wholeheartedly believe that as a Health Care Interpreter (HCI), I can help our health care providers improve their compliance and clinical outcomes and reduce disparities in access to quality healthcare services in general. Furthermore, the patients deserve to have a voice, and that's where a HCI can help bridge that gap. The HCI is an advocate for patients who experience communication barriers, and we work to facilitate that, ensuring patients receive the care they're entitled to. It makes me feel happy, satisfied, and proud of my interpreting service when patients get the care they deserve. I've always wanted to do my best in this career.

Language barriers in healthcare lead to miscommunication between the health care provider and patient, which decreases the quality of healthcare delivery, and adversely impacts the relationship between the provider and their patient. A lot of people think that patients can just get interpreters on-demand through the use of video remote interpreting (VRI), but availability of this service depends on the reliability of technology, such as video conferencing equipment, internet connection and bandwidth. If any of these factors are compromised, the VRI session may be interrupted, delayed or distorted. A lack of communication in a healthcare setting can lead to mistakes and potential harm for the patients, and that's why certified HCI are so important.

In general, HCIs don't get benefits and at the pay rates that language companies offer for certified interpreting, it can be difficult to provide for ourselves and our families. If we were able to schedule our appointments directly, and get paid a fair wage, we would be able to earn a living. We just want a fair slice of the pie.