

To: Senate Committee on Health Care
From: Edgar Valdez, 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 Edgar Valdez and I have been a Spanish interpreter for seven and a half years. My family is Mexican American and saw firsthand the struggle that they face when first immigrating to the US. I wanted to find a way to help so I immersed myself in linguistics. From that point on, I realized I had a true talent and passion for it. There are many special things that come along with being an interpreter. Being able to facilitate an important conversation between two parties that otherwise could never smoothly communicate, is a really neat part of what I do.

Language barriers can impact various aspects of medical practice and provide health care. For example, non English patients might have difficulty describing to their healthcare provider about the pain or scale of their condition.

I love doing this job, but regrettably, this industry is exploited leaving the dedicated interpreters who aspire to excel unable to bear the burden of training expenses, medical insurance, and retirement savings. Language agencies reap all the benefits and financial gains.

A statewide scheduling and payment system can centralize the process of scheduling interpreter facilities, interpreters and insurance providers, ensuring that qualified interpreters are available across the entire state. This will ultimately improve language access and healthcare outcomes for individuals with limited English proficiency.

My experience as a healthcare interpreter would significantly transform if I had the opportunity to work directly with the state to obtain appointments. First, it would streamline the appointment referral process, and allow me to provide timely and effective services between health care providers and patients with limited English proficiency. Working directly with the state would also present an opportunity for increased collaboration and coordination with government agencies responsible for healthcare services. This partnership would enable me to actively contribute insights and recommendations from the interpreter's perspective to improve overall quality and accessibility of healthcare for linguistically diverse communities. By establishing a direct line of communication and establishing a relationship based on trust and mutual respect and understanding, I'd have the ability to advocate for the needs and rights of the patients I serve, influencing policy decisions that impact healthcare access and language services.

Additionally, collaborating with the state would allow enhanced professional development opportunities. Being involved in government-led initiatives, training programs, and workshops specifically tailored towards interpreters would expose me to the latest advancement in interpretation techniques, cultural competence and effective communication strategies. This continuous learning experience would sharpen my skills, increase my knowledge base, and ultimately enhance the quality of interpretation services I provide to the patients. Overall, the

ability to work directly with the state to obtain appointments would revolutionize my experience as a healthcare interpreter, empowering me to contribute proactively to improving healthcare access and outcomes for diverse populations. It would grant me the opportunity to be an active advocate, a trusted resource, and catalyst for positive change within the healthcare system.