



February 12, 2024

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden and Members of the Health Care Committee,

My name is Liz Marquez, I am the Policy Manager at PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union. At PCUN, we work to empower farmworkers and working Latinx families to improve their working conditions through community building, organizing, and policy advocacy.

On behalf of our members, I am providing testimony in support of SB 1578. Our members depend on health care interpretation and need interpreters who are qualified and certified and we know that in order to retain and recruit for this essential workforce, their working conditions must be improved.

As a farmworker union, we strive to improve and protect the living and working conditions of our communities. Part of this mission includes ensuring that they receive proper medical attention both physically and attentively through health care interpretation. Farmworkers are particularly vulnerable to many of the most serious health consequences because of the work they perform, meaning that access to quality health care is vital to our farmworker population and this includes health care interpretation.

When our communities have access to quality health care interpretation, they are allowed to have meaningful communication with their health care provider. The quality care certified and qualified interpreters provide for our communities also helps reduce patient stress because they know they are receiving the best care possible.

That is why PCUN has been in support of previous bills to ensure health care providers work with qualified and certified health care interpreters. However, the working conditions that health care interpreters face drive interpreters out of the profession, further straining language access in the state.

There is still work to be done to ensure that the health care interpreters who provide this essential service are paid fairly for their skills and have better working conditions. That is what SB 1578 aims to achieve. By building a public online scheduling portal, health care interpreters would be able to be contacted and paid directly, and interpreters would be able to invest in ongoing training and certification, professionalizing the industry. This will guarantee that health care interpreters earn living wages and benefits while simultaneously helping us reach out statewide health equity goals.

We believe in building a more equitable Oregon that provides quality language access to ensure patients are receiving full care and retaining this essential workforce. PCUN urges the committee to support and vote yes on SB 1578.

Liz Marquez Gutierrez
Policy Manager
PCUN