

Submitter: Amanda Wheeler-Kay
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB1578

President Patterson, Vice-President Hayden, and members of the committee:

For the record, my name is Amanda Wheeler-Kay. I am a Certified Health Care interpreter and have worked in the greater Portland area as an interpreter since 2007. I also work as an interpreter educator.

As you may know, we do not currently have a robust well-trained pool of health care interpreters in Oregon. SB 1578 addresses systemic problems that impede us from this goal.

One key element of this proposed legislation is the mandate to contract with a non-profit entity that “works with [credentialed] interpreters and individuals from immigrant, refugee, low-income and rural communities.” This is important for two reasons:

- 1) representation in contract negotiations – The workforce of spoken language interpreters is largely made up of immigrants, refugees, and /or people of color. There is no mechanism to ensure that interpreters and non-English speaking communities have a voice at the table. Can you imagine someone negotiating on your behalf for your pay and working conditions without input from you? If you can, you feel our pain.
- 2) Language service providers are for-profit companies. In this day and age, how many businesses do you know that consider any factor to be as important as maximizing profits in negotiating contracts and setting policies and procedures? As long as for-profit businesses de facto set the conditions and prices for the interpreting profession, profits will continue to be prioritized over all other considerations including quality service for consumers and living wages for interpreters.

I would also like to point out that this bill has requirements for the non-profit entity that further support a robust well-trained interpreter pool. Specifically:

- providing training for health care interpreters, and
- involving credentialed interpreters in developing strategies to improve education and training, recruitment and support.

This is important. Currently, some language service agencies reimburse interpreters

for out-of-pocket costs of training, and a few arrange training opportunities for interpreters with whom they contract, but this is not the norm. What's more, language services agencies have not been expected to support interpreters with training.

Thank you for your time, and I ask that you vote yes on SB1578.