

February 9, 2024

The Honorable Rev. Dr. Deb Patterson  
Chair  
Senate Committee on Health Care  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

The Honorable Cedric Hayden  
Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Health Care  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Senator Patterson, Senator Hayden and Committee Members,

My name is Ana Catalina Jones of Hillsboro, Oregon and I had the opportunity to testify at the Public Hearing on Monday, February 12 in opposition to SB 1578.

While I appreciate the intent behind the bill, particularly in its support of fair compensation for health care interpreters, I'm concerned that it doesn't do enough to protect the limited English proficient (LEP) patients who rely on access to qualified medical interpreters at their moment of need, nor does it allow for quality assurance.

While the portal would have the ability to schedule appointments and make payments to OHA registered interpreters, it fails to address the importance of the quality of interpretation. Not once was the quality of interpretation after a completed encounter mentioned in these requirements, so if there was a grievance either by the healthcare provider or the limited English proficient patient, who would be responsible for addressing that with the interpreter? There seems to be an ongoing misconception, which has also been unfortunately conveyed in some of these testimonies, about the quality of interpretation services as they are being delivered today. Language service companies have mechanisms in place for grievance processes where interpreters can be followed up with, coached, and provided with additional training opportunities to ensure the highest level of quality.

It was also mentioned that the portal would "allow for interpreters to choose where they would like to work" and negotiate their pay rate. Unfortunately, it isn't practical to put a healthcare provider with a patient waiting to be seen to look for a qualified/certified interpreter in a portal that can be available for that appointment, and on top of that, not be certain that they will accept the assignment until payment is secured. That presents a clear delay in care threatening the health and civil rights protections of the LEP patient.

Lastly, the bill fails to address how remote interpretation will work. During the hearing, it was mentioned that many of the interpreters in the registry have chosen against working remotely. Language service companies' contract with healthcare providers to ensure language access at the patient's moment of need – whether that is remote via audio or video, or on-site interpretation. SB 1578 fails to consider the vast number of interpreters needed to handle the state's interpretation volume and how Oregonians who speak languages outside of the languages in the portal will be supported.

Thanks again for the opportunity to verbalize these concerns.

Yours,

Ana Catalina Jones  
Testing and Training Manager, LanguageLine Solutions  
Interim Chair, Oregon Council On Health Care Interpretation