

To: Senate Health Care
From: Alicia Temple, Oregon Law Center
Date: March 10, 2019
Re: SB 698

Chair Monnes Anderson and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), I respectfully request your support for SB 698, to require prescription label translations for Oregonians with limited English proficiency. This bill will have significant impacts on improving the health of communities who currently are not provided with medical instructions in a language they can read.

OLC is a non-profit organization that provides free legal help to people struggling to make ends meet. Our mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities in Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. We advocate for our clients and for the services and programs that help them to overcome poverty. Health and issues of health equity are at the forefront of the needs of our clients.

Oregon has done a lot of work to increase availability of healthcare insurance for individuals but true access depends on more than having insurance. It also means being able to effectively receive care and treatment. There are too many examples of how language barriers have led to harmful health outcomes. Providing written translation of prescription labels would make a significant difference in reducing health disparities. SB 698 does two things:

Improve comprehension through label translation

- Require that pharmacies in Oregon provide prescription container labels in both English and a readable language for LEP patients.

Improve comprehension through oral interpretation

- Ensures that patients are aware of their right to interpretation services at pharmacies (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act; ACA) through conspicuous signage in multiple languages.

Access to medical information in a language that a patient understands is critically important. There has been litigation over a lack of interpretation services in other states, and OLC is looking into legal options for our clients who have experienced this disparity. Passing SB 698 would preempt the need for this remedy.