

Chair Barker and members of the committee,

Hello, I am single mother and Spanish medical interpreter. And for the last five years I've dedicated part of my life to the profession known as medical interpreting. At first, I enthusiastically drove all over Oregon for Linguava, feeling privileged to be able to serve the LEP, limited English proficiency, community. This was the first vendor I worked with. But soon, I realized more and more that there were several inconsistencies. For example, irresponsible behavior within the healthcare industry and the interpreter profession.

After carefully analyzing and making my own observations with my previous experience at Scripps Health, a non-profit healthcare system based in San Diego, California that includes five hospitals and nineteen outpatient facilities and treats a half million patients annually through 2600 affiliated physicians, and this is just information off of Wikipedia that anyone can look up.

I started realizing how broken the linguistic field for non-English speakers was in the Portland Metro area. This later became my area of concentration. After meticulously dealing and interacting with countless patients at a culturo-linguistic level. I realized that 95 percent of the patients I helped with my language skills kept suffering and didn't find healing. They continued to suffer because of language barriers and did not find healing through their various appointments.

I decided to take control of the situation, meaning that I started viewing these individuals as my own patients and not just patients that required my linguistic services. I also began to realize that a huge part of the problem happened and keeps happening due to the lack of oversight and negligence that occurs within this field. I re-assessed the situation and later realized that one of the main differences that I believe has an impact on the industry is that interpreters are not able to bargain for themselves. Because they are trapped in these stingy agencies that could care less about patient care.

I started remembering that at least at Scripps the people who became interpreters were already health care professionals in some capacity that could speak a second language and had knowledge medical field and knew about and bedside care culture. These people that passed a Scripps language test would then go into a sophisticated system that would always match a patient to a certified interpreter in an efficient and timely manner. This was totally different than the disaster I began to witness here in Oregon through the vendors that were providing low quality interpreters to fill appointments in a haphazard fashion.

Soon after those discoveries, I started experiencing abuse from these vendors. Here are several examples:

- I.- Vendors dangerously recruit any individual that knows enough Spanish and English to get by instead of cautiously vetting candidates to see if they have a degree of language proficiency befitting the healthcare industry.

- II. Vendors play favorites in consistently choosing less qualified interpreters who are not certified, who cost less to pay. Hence making more profit and displacing and disrupting the more qualified interpreters who can provide a higher quality of care and interpretation for these patients who are underserved by these vendors, by not getting readier access to the interpreters that have gone through rigorous testing.
- III. We hardly have access to the contracts we sign with these vendors. The most detrimental part of these contracts is that we are unaware at what we are being exposed to when these vendors contract with these hospitals that blatantly are violating state regulations.
- IV. Vendors have been monopolizing the interpretation industry and coluting among each other to trap interpreters without upward mobility security and stability greatly decreasing to even their best interpreters to not be able to give their best and sacrificing patients simply to have advantage over the independent contractor known as an interpreter and increasing their profit.
- V. Throughout my years of interpreting in the state of Oregon I've encounter so many cases that leave the state of Oregon susceptible to a tremendous liability. And frankly I'm surprised there hasn't been a class action lawsuit. Then again, in this current broken system the interpreters are the scapegoat of the whole sham.
- VI. The last but most painful experience was leading up to my daughter's birthday last year. I wanted to do everything I could to give her a party to remember so I worked extra hard and more hours to make the monthly budget work. However, I was devastated when i saw my paycheck and the wages that had been stolen from me. I have this documented and I'm prepared to share it. All I have to say is that kindness never hurt anybody and I hope justice comes to these vendors that string us interpreters along while stealing our wages. Perhaps justice being served will be my testimony being heard. Thank you all for taking the time to hear my story.