

April 25, 2019

To whom it may concern,

My name is Dulce Avila Mendez, I am a Spanish certified healthcare interpreter in Oregon. I have been interpreting in the healthcare and social service area since 2015. I am writing to share some of my experiences working as an interpreter.

During the past four years I have contracted with three different interpreting agencies in Oregon. Most of my work with all three agencies has been interpreting medical appointments. Appointments such as adult healthcare, children's care, women's health, birth control, pregnancy testing, prenatal care, mental health, refugee screening, dental and many more. At locations such as clinics, hospitals, urgent care, dental offices, homes, nursing homes, non-profit agencies and more. I have worked mornings, days, evenings, nights, weekdays, weekends, holidays and any time an interpreter is needed.

Each agency has its own way of assigning their appointments usually by telephone or through an app or portal. Appointments are available in advance at the request of the provider (i.e. doctor) and most requests are made within weeks, days, hours or minutes of the appointment. Once I have accepted an appointment, I cannot return or switch the appointment unless there is an emergency, otherwise I risk losing contracts with that agency, and this is understandable. What is not understandable to me is when the same agencies cancel the appointments within hours or minutes and refuse any type of payment; this practice is common and ongoing. When I have asked why this is, the agencies have said they do not receive payment from the requestor therefore they cannot pass payment to me, something I do not believe to be true. This happens often and in my experience I have received lash back when asking questions so in fear of losing work I stopped asking why whenever I've found myself shortchanged. Instead I found myself working harder to make up for lost wages and time.

I write to support HB 2231 in hopes that we can all work together to support all interpreters earn a fair wage, be treated with dignity and respect, which in return will benefit providers, patients and our community as whole by continuing to bridge the language gap in a professional manner.

Sincerely,

Dulce Avila Mendez

Portland, Oregon