

Legislative Fiscal Office

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Joint Committee on Ways and Means

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To: Human Services Subcommittee

From: Tom MacDonald, Legislative Fiscal Office

Date: June 8, 2021

Subject: HB 2359 – Relating to health care interpreters
Work Session Recommendations

HB 2359 amends state laws with respect to health care interpreters who assist patients who prefer to communicate a language other than English. The measure requires health care providers to work with health care interpreters (HCI) from the HCI registry administered by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), except in specific circumstances. OHA must adopt rules to ensure coordinated care organizations and other health care providers work with a certified or qualified HCI when interpretation is needed for patients covered under the state's medical assistance programs, and that reimbursement for these services occurs.

The measure requires a study on the best model for an online platform for patients and health care providers to contract with health care interpreters, and how to finance the platform no later than July 1, 2022. It also adds a 60-day notification deadline OHA must meet when determining a person's application to become a qualified or certified HCI. OHA must provide affordable (or no cost) health care interpreter training and continuing education in accordance with standards adopted by the Oregon Council on Health Care Interpreters. OHA must maintain a record of all health care interpreters who have completed an approved training program and establish and maintain a registry for all qualified or certified health care interpreters with a process for interpreters to update their information each biennium.

HB 2359 declares an emergency and takes effect on passage, with different portions of the measure becoming operative on September 1 and July 1, 2022, and January 1, 2023.

The estimated fiscal impact totals \$855,670 in 2021-23. This includes \$670,664 General Fund, \$66,812 Other Funds, and \$118,194 Federal Funds, and two positions (1.50 FTE) in OHA's Office of Equity and Inclusion. OEI will need one Operations and Policy Analyst 3 and one Administrative Specialist 2 position for programmatic and operational support. The estimate also includes funding for training, community outreach and engagement, and contractual work to help with the required study.

Recommended Changes

The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends adoption of the -A5 amendment, which adds a General Fund appropriation and expenditure limitation increases to the bill to support the fiscal impact.

Final Subcommittee Action

LFO recommends that HB 2359, as amended by the -A5 amendment, be moved to the Ways and Means Full Committee.

Carriers

Full Committee: _____

House Floor: _____

Senate Floor: _____