



Memorandum

To: Chair Prusak, Vice-Chair Salinas and Vice-Chair Hayden and Members of the House Committee on Health Care

From: Susy Molano, Oregon Health Care Interpreters Association, Executive Director
Maria Michalczyk, MA, RN, Oregon Health Care Interpreters Association,
President

Date: March 2, 2021

Re: Support for HB 2359

On behalf of the Oregon Health Care Interpreters Association (OH CIA), we respectfully request support for HB 2359. OH CIA is a non-profit organization founded in 2010 by interpreters and dedicated to creating positive changes for health care interpreters (HCI). OH CIA conducted a statewide survey of health care providers in late 2020 and found that 93.55% of respondents caring for limited language proficient patients required health care interpreters. The survey showed that across the state, there is a great need for health care interpreter services. To fully achieve health equity, we must remove the language barrier between a provider and a patient to get the best health care results. And in the age of the COVID-19 pandemic, language barriers and a lack of language services too often prevent high-risk essential workers and LEP patients from obtaining health care when they need it most.

OH CIA, whose vision it is to foster a highly skilled and professional health care interpreter community that is economically successful and valued as integral members of the health care team, supports HB 2359 as the first step towards an accountable and equitable system for health care interpreters. We know that when a health care provider works with a certified health care interpreter, the outcome is better for the patient as they are guaranteed accurate and effective interpretation. Holding health care providers and interpretation service companies accountable for the provision of certified or qualified health care interpreters elevates the profession and sets a uniform standard in interpreting.

As one of the primary HCI training organizations in the state, OH CIA's 60-hour training course has educated hundreds of bilingual and multilingual individuals who have gone on to become certified or qualified interpreters through the OHA OEI process. In 2010, when OH CIA started its training program, the training was offered at no cost to participants and due to the costs of sustaining the program and trainers, began charging a modest tuition to cover administrative and trainer expenses in 2013. Over the last several years, OH CIA has worked diligently to obtain grants that have provided nearly 800 educational scholarships for those seeking health care interpreter training or continuing education credits. This has made qualification a reality for more languages in Oregon, especially those of lesser diffusion. OH CIA has always been aware of the need of affordable training for our communities; we look forward to working with OEI and

the Oregon Council on Health Care Interpreters in exploring ways we can continue to offer this effective training to interpreters across the state under the new “no cost or affordable” parameter in this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 2359. Health care interpreters are professionals who bridge the language and cultural gaps between a health care professional and limited English proficient (LEP) patient. **We respectfully urge you to vote yes on HB 2359 because the professionalization of health care interpreting is critical to the health outcomes for all patients.**