

March 2, 2021

To: House Committee on Health Care  
Re: Support for HB 2359

Dear members of the Health Care Committee,

My name is Maria Fiallos and I am an Oregon Health Authority/Certified Commission for Healthcare Interpreters certified Spanish interpreter.

I am writing to support HB 2359 and asking you to vote yes on HB 2359 which will close a current loophole that allows health care interpretation services to hire unqualified health care interpreters.

I've been an interpreter since January 2016, and was certified in January 2017. I have spent considerable time and money obtaining and maintaining my certification. I do this for two main reasons, the first to provide better service to my community and the second to remain competitive in what is, the best description I can think of: a dog- eat- dog industry.

Competition between agencies to obtain clientele has had the most detrimental effect on patients, interpreters and providers. Agencies will outbid each other for interpreters with the lowest price, which drives down wages for certified/qualified interpreters. This also creates a disincentive for interpreters to go through the process of certification; and also, for those of us who are certified, to continue interpreting.

The current loophole allows agencies to hire non-qualified/non-certified interpreters who they can pay less, but at the same time, provide inferior services. Untrained interpreters make mistakes ranging from unprofessional demeanor and ethics violations to just plain misinterpretation that leads to misdiagnosis (although the doctors will never admit it).

I consider myself a good interpreter, not perfect, but I try my best. However, at the present time, I'm so tired of agency antics that I've taken a temporary full-time job. I still interpret, but much less. This is because the agencies, even if they say they do, do not give certified/qualified interpreters preference. The agencies are businesses that do what they can to maximize profits. They prefer interpreters who they can pay less and mostly interpreters that work solely for their agency. Although these interpreters are not employees, the agencies have to incentivize them to be available when they need to fill appointments to fulfill their contracts. So these one-agency interpreters get the bulk of the appointments first. What's left over is offered to the rest of us. In a sense, both the agencies and the health care providers are benefiting from having steady employees without paying the benefits.

I personally, am tired of scrabbling for appointments. It wears a person down, as does the whole system. It is difficult to watch less qualified interpreters provide sub-par services, and it's hard to

expect other health care professionals to take us seriously when there is no consistency in the service we provide. We need to work together like a well-oiled machine and increase the quality of care people with Limited English Proficiency receive.

Please vote yes on HB 2359, and thank you for your time.

Maria Fiallos

OHA & CCHI Certified Spanish Interpreter