

Farmworkers and Latino Working Families United

March 2, 2021

House Health Care Committee

RE: Support for HB 2359

Chair Prusak, Vice-chairs Hayden, Vice Chair Hayden and Salinas, and members of the committee,

My name is Martha Sonato, I am the Political Director at PCUN- Oregon's Farmworker Union. On behalf of PCUN, I would like to submit testimony in support of HB 2359 - the Healthcare Interpretation Accountability Act, to ensure our communities with Limited English Proficiency have access to certified and properly trained interpreters.

We represent Oregon's farmworkers and low wage Latinx workers. Last year was a particularly challenging year for all and especially frontline workers, such as farmworkers. The COVID-19 pandemic, wildfires, state budget cuts and an economic crisis have created a perfect storm for Oregon's working class families.

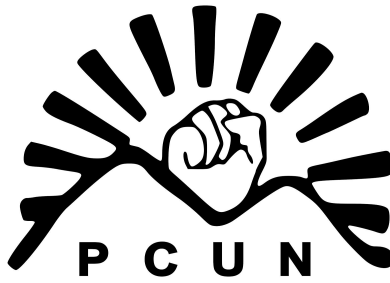
Farmworkers are particularly vulnerable to many of the most serious health consequences because of the work they perform. They are exposed to wildfire smoke, do heavy, physically exerting work in hot temperatures, with high levels of physical and mental stress, and with pesticide exposure. These conditions are linked to many serious health impacts on farmworkers, ranging from heat exhaustion to kidney disease.¹

As a farmworker union, we strive to improve and protect the living and working conditions of our communities. Part of this mission includes ensuring that they receive proper medical attention both physically and attentively through medical interpretation. When our communities have access to high quality healthcare interpretation, they are allowed to have meaningful communication with their healthcare provider.

In Oregon, of the 87,000 farmworkers; about 40% are indigenous and speak almost only indigenous languages. In the Mid-Willamette Valley, we hear languages ranging from Purepecha, to Mixteco and Mayan.²

¹ Sarah Bronwen Horton, *They Leave Their Kidneys in the Fields: Illness, Injury, and Illegality among U.S. Farmworkers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).

² Larson, Alice. "Oregon Update Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Enumeration Profiles Study". (2013): 38



The quality care certified and qualified interpreters provide for our communities also help reduce patient stress because they know they are receiving the best care possible. HB 2359 would ensure that health care providers work with only OHA approved qualified and certified health care interpreters. Becoming a qualified and certified health care interpreter in Oregon is vital to ensure that people with Limited English Proficiency are provided accurate and effective interpretation services.

Agricultural workers are a vulnerable workforce therefore we must ensure that their medical needs are being heard and accurately understood. This bill would ensure that all patients, regardless of their ability to speak English, receive safe and quality health care.

I thank you for your time and consideration today. PCUN respectfully requests the committee to support HB 2359.

Thank you,

Martha Sonato
Political Director