



Changing healthcare to work for you.

Chair Rachel Prusak  
900 Court St. NE, H-489  
Salem, Oregon 97301  
House Health Care Committee

February 24, 2021

Re: Letter of support of HB 2359

In May of 2020 AllCare CCO, Inc. was awarded the Language Access Champion Award from the National Council on Health Care Interpreting. As an organization, we have worked in partnership with So-Health E (the Regional Health Equity Coalition in Southern Oregon) to focus on the training and education of bilingual Individuals. As a result of this work, we have increased the interpreter workforce capacity in Jackson, Josephine, Curry and Douglas County from 1 in 2015, to 124 in 2019 (as of 2/5/2021 170 individuals). These 124 individuals represent 14 spoken and signed languages. Not only have we increased capacity, we have seen an increase in the utilization of interpreter services by our Limited English Proficiency (LEP) members accessing services. At the same time, we have seen decreased total costs for these individuals.

The entire service delivery network must be reviewed to understand what the language needs of Limited English Speakers are. If healthcare systems cannot provide bilingual providers that address these needs, they must address the gap by working with Traditional Health Workers and Certified and Qualified Health Care Interpreters.

The health care interpreter (HCI) is an essential part of the medical team. Interpreters offer a language and cultural bridge between a health care professional (like a doctor, nurse, dentist, etc.), and a limited English proficient (LEP) patient. This ensures the proper communication that allows for the LEP patient to receive quality medical care.

It is the policy of AllCare to address, consistent with our core objectives, the specific language needs of Limited English Proficient (LEP) beneficiaries, which operate as artificial barriers to full and meaningful participation in AllCare programs or activities. This requires that AllCare and contracted providers evaluate how a LEP person's inability to understand oral and written information provided by and about AllCare's program or activities might adversely impact their ability to fully participate in or benefit from that program or activity.

The Latino Policy & Politics initiative at UCLA has also shown that in California, the current Latino MD physician shortage will not be met until 2515 (<https://latino.ucla.edu/research/addressing-the-latino-physician-shortage-workforce-briefing/>). Though California is demographically different than Oregon, the Medicaid system is managed in much of the same way as Oregon.

This article, and volumes of other research not mentioned, support that addressing Cultural and Linguistic needs of individuals meets the Triple Aim. Until the providers speak or sign the language of Individuals is adequate for community needs, Interpreters bridge that gap.



An Oregon Benefit Company

900 Court St.  
Grants Pass, OR 97526  
Phone (541) 471-4106  
Fax (541) 471-3784  
Toll free (888) 460-0185  
TTY 711  
AllCareHealth.com

### How in person interpretation can save a life

AllCare had an elderly Spanish-speaking member hospitalized for COVID-19. The hospital was communicating with her via a telephone and video remote interpreter service. These methods were not adequate nor were they the appropriate language services for the individual's needs and proved to be detrimental to the member's health, per chart notes.

AllCare Health's Medical Directors review hospitalized members that have been inpatient over 7 days. The reviewing Medical Director identified that the hospital was trying to locate an English-speaking family member. The member was to be placed in hospice as they were doing so poorly.

The clinical team then reached out to AllCare's Language Access Coordinator, who arranged for an in-person interpreter to be present for four hours per day. Within a week, they had improved to the point where they were eating and communicating again. The interpreter was also able to help with communication to the family and update them on the member's health conditions. This allowed for the individual to be discharged home to the family and resulted in a positive outcome for everyone.

This story was a major success for this member and AllCare's language access program, and a training opportunity for the providers involved. These stories are not the "Norm" unfortunately, there are too many gaps in the current system to enforce these rules.

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically impacted the Spoken and Signed Language Health Care Interpreter workforce. Many Healthcare Interpreters were laid off immediately, those that invested to transition to remote work were, unutilized by health systems that shifted to cheaper, lower quality Interpreter Agencies that do not employ Oregon Certified and Qualified Interpreters.

The workforce was added to the phase1a vaccine distribution plan, by doing this the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) recognized one of the systemic barriers for Limited English Speaking patients. Unfortunately, this workforce was not added to Vaccine distribution plans by systems in Oregon, and many administrators were vaccinated before this key workforce was.

If we are to begin Recognizing, Rectifying, and Reconciling Systemic Racism in Public Health, this is the moment to begin to support Communities of Color disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 pandemic. When a Black patient is able to talk to a Black Provider or Black Community Health Worker about historical public health concerns such as the Tuskegee Study, the patient is more likely to have an open conversation about their concerns.

Regional Indigenous populations, have the same concerns related to trust and the medical community. These are nations of people, which the federal government has made an effort to exterminate in the past. HealthCare Interpreters and Traditional Health Workers are able to communicate with these communities, in ways that the current system cannot.



Changing healthcare to work for you.

AllCare CCO, Inc. fully supports HB 2359. This will benefit both urban and rural communities in Oregon, and will allow interpreter services to be utilized throughout the state.

I would like to invite you to Southern Oregon to review our program, meet our diverse interpreters, and hear about the community impact we have seen by following the current laws and regulations.

Respectfully,  
Stick Crosby  
Network & Health Equity Director  
AllCare Health, Inc.  
Pronouns: He/Him/His

Kristina Espinoza, QMI  
Language Access Manager  
AllCare Health, Inc.

Iram Nunes, RN, QMI  
Utilization Management RN  
AllCare Health, Inc.



An Oregon Benefit Company

1701 NE 7th St.  
Grants Pass, OR 97526  
Phone (541) 471-4106  
Fax (541) 471-3784  
Toll free (888) 460-0185  
TTY 711  
AllCareHealth.com