

All patients must be able to communicate effectively and accurately with their health care providers. Health care interpreters provide a crucial service in this regard, and I completely support your efforts to make sure that properly trained and qualified interpreters are available to patients that need them. An easily accessible registry of qualified interpreters will also be a great asset to providers. HB 2359 also ensures necessary workplace protections for health care interpreters. These are all commendable aspects to the bill!

However, the language in section 6 is problematic:

(6) A health care provider shall ensure that a health care interpreter who works with the provider and a patient in person has received all vaccines and testing recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for health care workers. The provider shall administer any vaccines or provide the testing that a health care interpreter lacks at no cost to the health care interpreter.

The language in this section indicates that health care interpreters would be mandated to receive recommended vaccines, while health care providers in Oregon retain the right to decline. This is certainly not equitable - health care interpreters should also be able to privately choose what medical interventions they need, in consult with their own physician, not as a condition of employment. If a health care interpreter wants a vaccine or a test, certainly it should be provided at no cost. But it must be voluntary. Informed consent is a basic human right.

I urge you to revisit section 6 and make sure that the right of health care interpreters to accept or decline medical treatment without coercion is preserved.