

To: House Committee on Health Care

HB2359 supports the interpreting profession and the LEP community we serve

When the OHA registry has over 700 interpreters in the registry, yet their schedules are not full, it is hard to believe it is hard to find interpreters in Oregon. The problem must be something else. I have heard many interpreters ask me why they should bother to get certified, since getting certified meant they might no longer get work.

This bill makes important changes for interpreters that solve problems the profession has been dealing for a long time. Requiring that the certification or qualification status of an interpreter with the OHA be recorded in the health record of a patient is good for patients.

A colleague of mine who recently passed away, Heidi Schmaltz, often told me that she would be interpreter number four in a string of healthcare appointments. Finally, when they got to her, the patient would understand how to use Albuterol. This meant that patients with asthma had been suffering from their asthma for longer, they had paid interpreters and doctors and nurses three times for ineffective appointments, and the patient had gone to three ineffective appointments before she showed up. That is why I strongly support this bill in her memory. It is to support patients and the doctors who serve them. Yesterday I heard the same story from another interpreter. Heidi was not unique.

Who benefits when the name of the interpreter and their OHA registration number is entered into the patient's medical record?

- The patient. There is verification that best practices have been followed to find competent professionals who are tested in their interpreting skills and held to the same standards as all the other professionals in the room.
- The doctor. There is a lower risk of malpractice.
- The hospital system, which has a lower risk of readmission.
- The insurance company, which has a lower risk of paying for extended rates for in-hospital stays.
- The interpreter, who can be contacted (it is now a requirement) if was an infectious disease event at the appointment. This prevents the spread of disease.

Who benefits when the interpreter is mandated by law to receive the same personal protective equipment as the other healthcare providers? This is extended to providing appropriate vaccines to interpreters free of charge.

- The next patient the interpreter interacts with.
- The interpreter.
- The healthcare facility, which now has clear guidance.

- The general community, which benefits from reduced spread of disease.

Who benefits when companies that act as intermediaries between independent interpreters and healthcare providers have clear guidance regarding the services they are required to provide?

- The healthcare providers. Now they can get the services they have always expected: OHA certified and qualified interpreters at their facilities.
- Patients. They can know what to expect when they go to an appointment. It is no longer necessary to take their children or neighbors to support them in case the interpreter is not good enough.

Who benefits when there is a place to submit complaints?

- Everyone.

Who benefits when interpreters are treated in the same way as all the other professionals in Oregon, and are not artificially excluded from workers comp benefits?

- This will create clarity regarding what is an independent contractor and what is an employee. Today, though the law states that interpreters who work for a language company are neither contractors nor employees, this is difficult to explain to a healthcare provider who is accustomed to require that all their prime contractors provide workers comp for all the people who receive pay for their services, no matter their employment status.
- This exemption was not passed with the support of interpreters in the first place. People who hire interpreters passed it without consulting with interpreters. At that time, practicing interpreters and translators were not present in the legislative halls of Salem, Oregon.

Yours, on behalf of

- the limited English proficient patients and the people who serve them
- interpreters who have been professionalizing for years and losing work
- professionals who care about the people they serve

Helen Eby  
OHA Certified Spanish Interpreter since 2013  
HCI HCI000010194