

Submitter: Kenneth Cushing
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB584

The Honorable Rev. Dr. Deb Patterson
Chair, Oregon State Senate Committee on Health Care

The Honorable Cedric Hayden
Vice Chair, Oregon State Senate Committee on Health Care

Dear Senator Patterson and Senator Hayden,

My name is Kenneth Cushing, and I am an Oregon-based healthcare interpreter in Spanish. I write to oppose Oregon Senate Bill 584. This bill would require the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to develop a web-based platform to support the scheduling and payment of interpreters for language access for Oregonian health care patients. I oppose this bill because it threatens to make my life as an independent contractor much more difficult.

Nationally, more than 80% of interpreters and translators work as Independent Contractors (ICs). As an IC, I set my hours – I can accept or refuse assignments according to my schedule. For each of the companies I work with, I had to demonstrate my skills and qualifications, including taking their language proficiency and interpreter skills tests.

Having the Oregon Health Authority replace the language companies working in Oregon will make my life more challenging. Instead of working with multiple companies and hospitals directly, which makes it possible to fill my schedule out, I will be dependent on the OHA to provide assignments in Oregon. The bill also does not clarify how rates will be set, or who sets them.

For these reasons I oppose Senate Bill 584.

Sincerely,
Kenneth Cushing