

Submitter: K J
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB584

Dear Senator Patterson and Senator Hayden,

On behalf of remote interpreters providing language access to the limited English proficient and Deaf and hard of hearing patients of Oregon, I beg you to oppose Bill 584.

Shame on those privileged few guarding what they see as their territory with no real grasp on the overall language access needs of the state, trying to sneak in such a radical and damaging amendment during the cover of night.

After listening to the first three speakers, I was struck by the use of salacious, exaggerated, and cherry-picked anecdotes used to manipulate emotions without using facts or data to support their claims.

I have been a professional (both qualified and nationally certified) interpreter for over 30 years and am honored to help Oregonians have full communicative autonomy in their healthcare. I work for a language provider who, contrary to the erroneous claims of a few, has been an excellent employer. I have fair wages, benefits, ergonomic and safe working conditions, professional development opportunities, and a sense of pride and camaraderie with my colleagues in doing work that matters. My company takes on the vital administrative duties this bill is aiming to give to the state; including but not limited to:

- Recruiting qualified interpreters
- Vetting of interpreters
- Training of interpreters
- Human Resource support
- Management of Payroll, full benefits packages, and rewards programs
- Scheduling and staffing to meet on-demand customer needs in a multitude of languages
- Technical equipment provision and maintenance on all endpoints
- Quality assurance and oversight
- Community outreach

The list could go on. Not all interpreters want to be onsite independent contractors, not all LEP or Deaf or Hard of Hearing patients want local onsite interpreters who are in their social circles (loss of privacy), and not all who live in rural areas have access to local interpreters in their languages. It is naïve to think a small group of Spanish interpreters can cover the entire state of Oregon's immense language access needs.

Remote interpreters are vital to ensuring that all citizens of this country and the state of Oregon have immediate communication access to their healthcare encounters (many that are unplanned).

There are millions of remote sessions that take place each year in Oregon; 24/7, and it is a well-oiled machine, it requires all of the language companies, and thousands of qualified medical interpreters to meet that need and our LEP citizens deserve us to continue progressing this immediate access process, not rolling back to a less efficient, cumbersome proposed system that only benefits a few.

Because I care deeply about the linguistically and culturally diverse communities across Oregon and our country and want to ensure they continue to have full agency in their healthcare encounters, I strongly oppose this bill and its amendments.

Thank you for your time and attention to this concerning matter!

KJ, ASL Interpreter, CI/CT, NIC M