Submitter: Pheap Chab

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,

I am an interpreter based in Oregon. 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 of interpreters for Oregonian health care patients. Unfortunately, the bill as written would have the unintended consequence of delaying access to care for limited English proficient (LEP) and Deaf and Hard of Hearing patients in Oregon, impacting the quality and timeliness of care for some of Oregon's must vulnerable patients.

I work as an on-demand interpreter, ensuring language access for limited English proficient patients in Oregon and across North America. Last year, there were more than 2 million remote interpreting between encounters for LEP patients in Oregon, in more than 150 languages. A national base of interpreters is absolutely essential for the provision of language access, as smaller communities may not have enough on-site interpreters. In the early stages of the COVID-19 crisis, on-site interpreting was made nearly impossible. The language industry was able to quickly pivot to fill this vital need.

At present, there are approximately 1,000 interpreters in the Oregon registry in less than 25 languages. The interpreters in the Oregon Health Care Interpreter Registry provide primarily on-site interpreting in the greater Portland area. Simply put, there are not enough interpreters in Oregon to provide all of the health care interpreting that is required - and Federal law gives the same right to language access to all Limited English Proficient patients, regardless of language or location.

For these reasons, I oppose S. 584.

Thank you.

Pheap Chab