

February 16, 2023

The Honorable Rev. Dr. Deb Patterson  
Chair  
Senate Committee on Health Care  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

The Honorable Cedric Hayden  
Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Health Care  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Senator Patterson, Senator Hayden and Committee Members,

I'm writing on behalf of LanguageLine Solutions to express our opposition to Senate Bill 584.

LanguageLine Solutions created the phone interpreting industry 41 years ago, when our founder, a police officer and a Vietnam veteran, created a solution to reduce the increasingly dangerous situations caused by language and cultural barriers. Today, our more than 20,000 professional interpreters are located throughout the United States and across the globe, handling more than 59 million interactions each year across 240 languages, 24/7/365.

We are opposed to SB 584 as it would have the unintended consequence of exacerbating language barriers in Oregon as opposed to reducing them. The bill fails to recognize the structure of today's interpreting workforce. The majority of healthcare interpreting is provided through on-demand/remote interpretation. No one state, including Oregon has enough state-based interpreters to meet the increased demand for qualified medical interpreters. While on-site interpretation is an essential and critical modality of interpretation, it only represents a small fraction of the encounters that take place throughout the state.

There is a long and well-established process in place to connect healthcare providers to qualified medical interpreters in Oregon and throughout the country. Language service companies contract with healthcare organizations to ensure language access at the patient's moment of need and in the appropriate modality – whether that is on-demand via audio or video, or on-site/face to face interpretation.

In 2022, LanguageLine's professional medical interpreters facilitated hundreds of thousands of encounters across more than 100 languages for Oregon healthcare organizations. Together with our colleagues in the industry, our interpreters facilitated over 2 million healthcare encounters in the state. Yet, the Oregon Health Authority's interpreter registry only has 36 languages represented. SB 584 fails to consider the vast number of interpreters needed to handle the state's interpretation volume and how the Oregonians who speak languages outside of the 36 languages will be supported.

According to the U.S. Census' 2021 American Community Survey, nearly 220,000 Oregonians are limited English proficient – that's approximately 5.4% of the state's population. In the City of Portland alone, 7 percent of the population is LEP and continues to grow.

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Monterey, California 93940



Under SB 584, healthcare providers will be unable to meet their federal obligations under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act to ensure meaningful access to care for all of their patients, regardless of the language they speak.

I respectfully request that you oppose SB 584 and the proposed amendment as they fail to consider the complexities and realities of healthcare interpreting.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Scott W. Klein'.

Scott W. Klein

*President and CEO*

831-648-5555