

February 16, 2023

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, Senator Hayden and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue. My name is Matthew Riley. I've been an Oregon resident for nearly thirty years. I'm writing to express my 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. Our translation division is based in Portland and staffed by approximately 150 local linguists, localization engineers and other translation professionals. We also have over 400 on-site and on-demand interpreters living and working throughout the state of Oregon.

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. While we share the bill's goal to improve equity and quality of care for the state's linguistically diverse population, we're opposed to SB 584 in its current form 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 ensure language access for their limited English proficient and Deaf and Hard of Hearing populations. 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 how the Oregonians who speak languages outside of those 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.

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,

Matthew Riley
Regional Vice President
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