

To: The honorable members of the Senate Committee on Health Care  
In regards to: Measure SB584

Dear Senate Committee members,

I am a nationally certified ASL interpreter and OHA Certified Health Care Interpreter with more than 30 years experience working as an Independent Contractor. I also have the unique experience of having worked for three different agencies in Oregon in management level positions providing and overseeing onsite interpreting services. In those roles, I learned a great deal about contracts with a wide range of health care customers and how those directly impact the payment and policies agencies are required to accept and follow to provide services.

Before ever working for an agency, I held many beliefs which turned out to be misconceptions about how agencies function and how pricing and payments are determined. I have heard many of the same misconceptions mentioned during testimony in support of this bill, and was struck by a perspective which permeates the discussions which infers that Language Service Providers are suppressing rates or oppressing interpreters' opportunities. There is a feel of "us against them" when actually, the agencies are often working hard behind the scenes for the benefit of interpreters and patients.

You've already received a great deal of testimony which describes the work agencies do to ensure compliance requirements are met, to train and educate customers, to do their best to negotiate rates which are fair for interpreters.

**Some of the concerns I would like to emphasize are these:**

OHA is not a language authority, nor are they experienced in the evaluation, compliance or placement of interpreters into any healthcare settings. Language Service Providers have a wealth of experienced Subject Matter Experts, many of whom have actually worked as interpreters, so they are best situated to provide services and support to interpreters as well as educate customers.

In terms of the Washington State portal, when customers look at the portal, they can see the cost of every interpreter. Based on my experience as someone who used to be an interpreter in the Washington State portal, providers often looked for the least expensive interpreter. Additionally, at least with ASL rates, I see rates in the portal for ASL interpreters which are lower than what they are paid as Independent Contractors from agencies which serve Oregon healthcare systems.

Additionally, in Washington state, healthcare interpreting services for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind and Deaf Disabled patients are contractually managed by the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, not through a state health authority. This recognizes that services for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf Blind and Deaf Disabled community differ vastly from spoken language interpretation services. Sign Language interpreting is an accommodation under the

American with Disabilities Act and under the ADA the patient maintains the right to determine which interpreters and accommodations are needed, not the providers.

In testimony, people have mentioned there are more than 1000 interpreters on the OHA registry of Certified and Qualified interpreters. I have looked through the list of ASL interpreters who are qualified and of 253 total interpreters, close to 200 of those interpreters are from out of state and became qualified so they can provide remote ASL interpreting through national VRI services. In other words, they are not available for onsite work in the state of Oregon.

### **In summary**

While I oppose this legislation, I do believe spoken language interpreter pay rates need to be addressed and improved. However, this legislation is not the way to do it.

I see this legislation as being in conflict with rules of HB 2359, especially in regards to exceptions for placement of health care interpreters, in light of the fact Oregon is a large state with limited interpreting resources in remote areas.

I have concerns about how this legislation may conflict with the ADA.

For the rest I will refer you to the excellent summary section in Cynthia Roat's letter which addresses my same concerns.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

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