

Dear Senator Patterson and Senator Hayden,

I am submitting my written testimony in opposition to SB 584. I am a nationally certified ASL interpreter with 23 years of experience not only as an interpreter but with experience managing interpreting services for multiple health care facilities on a national level. Additionally, I have Deaf and hard of hearing family members. While I support efforts to improve access to healthcare for all Oregonians, I believe that this bill is not the right solution to the challenges facing the healthcare system.

SB 584 as it is proposed including current amendments will have unintended negative impacts on the ability for the limited English proficient, Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf-Blind, and Disabled communities. SB 584 does not address the intricacies that are required in order to provide a multi-faceted, 24/7 responsible response system for these Oregon community members. A responsive system requires constant oversight, cultural and linguistic expertise, an understanding of patient, provider and family needs to achieve equity in access to healthcare. While proponents of this measure have stated that this measure would create an equitable environment for interpreters, they have failed to remain patient focused in the solution. The bill does not address the patient need nor has its proposers engaged the patient populations who would be impacted in by this requirement. It is deplorable that a Washington based interpreter union has leveraged patient access to veil their agenda. These individuals do not represent as a whole the diverse, complex and large LEP, Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf-Blind and Disabled communities. I urge this committee to consider and engage with directly the patient communities who would be adversely impacted instead of allowing a very small group of individuals speak on behalf of all Oregonians.

SB 584 does not address the concerns given in testimony by the interpreters supporting the measure and most of which is already covered by HB 2359. Interpreters are largely independent contractors and as such set their rates and operate as a sole proprietorship. Agencies who work with these interpreters would often like them to become employees, but the interpreters choose to remain as contractors. Currently, the language service providers oversee compliance including but not limited to, background checks, millions of dollars in insurance, HIPAA, OIG, vaccination status, quality assurance and compliance. SB 584 does not address these mandated compliance oversight, the cost to the individual interpreter and most importantly it must be noted the failure to include these standard patient safety requirements poses great risk and liability to the individual interpreter and the State of Oregon.

In summary, while I support efforts to improve access to healthcare for all Oregonians, I believe that Oregon Senate Bill 584 is not the right solution to achieve this goal. I urge you to reconsider this bill and to work towards alternative solutions that address the underlying challenges facing the healthcare system.

Sincerely,

Krystill Brown

ASL/English Interpreter

RID; NAD; EIPA