

Subject: Opposition to SB1578

Dear Senate Health Care Committee,

As an Oregon certified Spanish medical interpreter and Oregon business owner I am writing to express my firm opposition to SB1578. I hope to highlight key concerns that require a reconsideration of the proposed legislation.

The current OHA registry of interpreters, unfortunately, falls drastically short in meeting the essential language access rights of Oregonian patients, particularly for patients who speak languages of lesser diffusion. This deficiency not only places an undue burden on healthcare providers but also raises concerns about compliance with §1557 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, where the responsibility for providing such access lies with the healthcare providers themselves. The proposed utilization of the registry and an online portal developed by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) or its contractors presents a grave risk of inadvertently curtailing language access for Oregonians, potentially exposing healthcare providers to civil rights liabilities they are ill-equipped to manage. This critical oversight jeopardizes the fundamental right to language access in healthcare, and urgent reconsideration is vital to avoid such unintended consequences.

Moreover, the portal's negative effects extend to healthcare providers, hindering their ability to secure "on-demand" remote interpreter services – a critical aspect, given that more than 65% of interpreter services in Oregon are delivered remotely. There are not enough interpreters in the state of Oregon to meet the diverse language needs. Will OHA support 24/7/365 remote interpreting, which requires significant and expensive additional technologies beyond a scheduling and payment portal? Additionally, the financial burden imposed on the state to oversee a voluntary and potentially underutilized portal is a cause for concern, particularly when outsourcing its management to a non-profit lacking specific experience or competence in running such systems.

In light of these concerns, I urge a thorough evaluation of alternative solutions that better address the need for improved patient access without compromising the efficiency and effectiveness of interpreter services. My goal is to ensure that any legislative initiative aligns with the overarching objective of facilitating optimal healthcare delivery to all patients, regardless of their language proficiency.

Thank you for considering my perspective on this matter. I look forward to engaging in a constructive dialogue to find solutions that serve the best interests of both patients, interpreters and healthcare providers.

Sincerely,

David Brackett

OHA Spanish Medical Interpreter # 010322 & Business owner

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