

To: Senate Committee on Health Care
From: Dennis Lam, Oregon Interpreters in Action
Re: Support for Statewide Health Care Interpreter Portal

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and members of the Committee,

I am Dennis Lam, a Vietnamese language interpreter for more than 4 years. I went into health care interpreting because I grew up in an immigrant family and I have witnessed how my parents and other elderly people in my community struggled through language barriers while receiving health care.

Through my years of service as a health care interpreter, I'm a living witness of how language barriers have a very negative impact on health care equity. When communication between patients and health care providers is misunderstood, good patient care outcomes are not fulfilled. Every appointment that my service as a health care interpreter has created a positive outcome for someone else is in itself a fulfillment of my happiness.

I would love to do this job as a career, and I know that there is a high need for my services, but unfair pay rates and cancellation policies are really keeping me from being able to make this my full-time job. Without support from the state level, health care interpreters will continue to struggle to make ends meet, and more patients will receive poor care due to language barriers.