

February 9, 2024

The Honorable Rev. Dr. Deb Patterson  
Chair  
Senate Committee on Health Care  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

The Honorable Cedric Hayden  
Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Health Care  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Senator Patterson, Senator Hayden and Committee Members,

I'm writing on behalf of LanguageLine Solutions to express our opposition to Senate Bill 1578 as it would have the unintended consequence of exacerbating language barriers as opposed to reducing them. The bill will threaten the civil rights of limited English proficient (LEP) Oregonians and create real harm for them if they are not provided with a qualified medical interpreter at their essential moment of need.

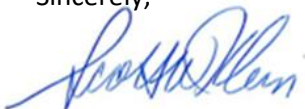
LanguageLine Solutions created the phone interpreting industry 42 years ago, when our founder, a police officer, and a Vietnam veteran, created a solution to reduce the increasingly dangerous situations caused by language and cultural barriers. Today, our more than 20,000 professional interpreters handle more than 75 million interactions each year across 240 languages, 24/7/365.

The bill fails to recognize the structure of today's interpreting workforce. In Oregon, over 65% of interpretation encounters are serviced through remote/on-demand interpretation. No one state, including Oregon, has enough state-based interpreters across all languages to meet the growing demand for qualified medical interpreters. The languages represented in the current OHA registry is a small fraction of the languages served by remote interpreting, as there are no or extremely few OHA registered interpreters in many of the languages spoken by LEP Oregonians.

There is a long and well-established process in place to connect healthcare providers to qualified medical interpreters in Oregon and throughout the country, either via remote interpretation or on-site. Language service companies' contract with healthcare organizations and government agencies to ensure language access at the patient's moment of need and in the appropriate modality – whether that is remote via audio or video, or on-site interpretation. Together with our colleagues in the industry, our interpreters facilitate millions of healthcare encounters in the state. SB 1578 fails to consider the vast number of interpreters needed to handle the state's interpretation volume and how the Oregonians who speak languages outside of the languages in the portal will be supported.

Under SB 1578, 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. I respectfully request that you oppose SB 1578 as it fails to consider the complexities and realities of healthcare interpreting in Oregon.

Sincerely,



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