

Subject: Opposition to SB1578

Dear Senate Health Care Committee,

You may have heard of the potential “purported” benefits of SB1578 and its “interpreter portal”, but we are here to provide some insight and well-earned perspective from the other side. Essentially, at its root, the mere concept of SB1578 would serve to hinder equal access to quality healthcare for Oregonians and frankly would jeopardize health outcomes for our limited English speaking populations. The needs of the patient are being ignored entirely, as this bill provides no solution for those that speak languages of lesser diffusion, and the paucity of interpreters available for them that are qualified or certified by Oregon standards. This would ultimately lead to a deprivation of services, further complicating an environment where quality of care is already limited and boldly challenged throughout our state. This is especially relevant in rural areas, and is also indicative of why on-demand services command a larger percentage of appointment volume over onsite appointments. One must consider the bigger universe when considering such a proposal.

Please also consider the restrictions that passing SB 1578 places on the state’s providers, as they try to achieve quality and timely care for their patients. Best practices for patient care affects outcomes. Patient equity is already an issue because of the limited scope of state qualified/certified interpreters. If the provider cannot reach a quick telephonic interpreter because they are not qualified in the state of Oregon, then the care is affected, pure and simple.

Please do the right thing and care about what is working in our state versus the suggested chaos that passing SB 1578 would create. This includes the idea of putting an unqualified nonprofit group to bumble accessing the art of interpreter scheduling, paying, billing, verifying OHP eligibility, billing correctly to CCOs, collecting on invoices, checking that interpreters are still credentialed, recruitment of new interpreters, handling complaints, and direct daily communications with providers on the whereabouts of interpreters running late, etc. These are the things that can only be handled by seasoned agencies, that know exactly how to maneuver a well-oiled machine. We have been successfully providing these critical services to Oregon for almost 40 years.

In closing, aside from the insurmountable administrative challenges this would create, SB 1578 ignores the many smaller populations of our state whose language has no one on the state of Oregon registry and probably never will have due to the size of their community and lack of interpreters. All of these good people add to our diverse population and they equally rely on dedicated providers who are committed to giving quality patient care. There would still need to be a reliance on other channels to effectively serve the entire state. So then why try and fix what isn’t broken? Only to migrate this work and spend money towards an entity ill-prepared to take this on? Thank you for your time to reflect on the many lives that will be negatively affected if SB 1578 were to pass.

Sincerely,

Robin Lawson, President
Passport To Languages

The team at Passport To Languages, Inc. (including our clients, their patients and our dedicated professional interpreters.)