

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

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

My name is Nahla Annous, and I have been an Arabic interpreter for 6 years. I became an interpreter because I was helping family members with their appointments and they were so happy that they were able to communicate with the health providers that they kept pushing me to become an interpreter. I love helping people from my country, it feels amazing to be able to do this work.

Having a certified interpreter who can give people accurate information about their healthcare is a big deal. I had a patient who was having surgery, and had gone to more than one appointment with the same doctor prior to the surgery day, who thought he was having his appendix removed. On the day of his surgery, he found out the surgery was actually for his tonsils. His family prepared him for one thing and it turned out to be a totally different surgery. I was so sad for him. I think everyone deserves to understand what is going on with their health.

I haven't been able to work a proper schedule since 2019, before Covid. The lack of consistent appointments and the low pay, combined with the travel time that we aren't paid for, makes it not worth it.

I'm hoping that being scheduled and paid through the state will lead to more appointments and better pay for myself and other interpreters.