

To: Senate Committee on Health Care  
From: Denia Márquez, 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 Denia Márquez and I am a Spanish health care interpreter, a job I have done for five years. I am a member of the Hispanic community and I have experience in the medical field, so health care interpreting was a good fit for me. I feel thankful that I am able to help people make decisions about their healthcare.

Unfortunately, I hear complaints too often from patients who have not been able to get certified health care interpreters for their medical appointments. They feel lost in the middle of serious medical treatments and unsure about what's next for their care. To be able to comprehend 100% of their medical condition is everything when it comes to making decisions about their treatment.

I love doing this job, but there are a lot of things that make it hard to do it full time. We don't get paid competitive wages for our skills, and language companies aren't interested in negotiations to increase our rates. Availability of work is uncertain, we don't have health benefits, and we don't get any support for professional development. It costs us money to get certified and continue our education, but the pay is so low that most people can't afford tuition.

If we were able to get a state-based appointment system, it would be a huge relief. We could have better consistency in our appointments, and we could provide better interpreting services to people who need them. It's cost effective for the state because fewer people will have to come in for unnecessary follow-ups and ER visits, and interpreters will also be paid better.