

SB 1578 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Health Care

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 2/7, 2/12

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure directs the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to establish and maintain a management system to schedule appointments and process billing for health care interpreters.

Detailed Summary:

Directs OHA to contract with a nonprofit to administer a management system for health care providers to schedule directly with qualified interpreters and process billing for services. Allows the nonprofit to contract with a vendor for a software system. Directs the nonprofit to develop plans to recruit, train, and provide professional development to interpreters. Allows the nonprofit to contract directly with interpreters to fill last-minute slots. Requires the nonprofit to report annually to OHA the amount of money applied to interpreter recruitment and training. Directs OHA to take all steps necessary to secure federal funds for interpretation services provided to Oregon Health Plan members.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Health care interpreters facilitate communication between health care providers and patients with limited English proficiency and the deaf and hard of hearing. The U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) estimates that in the State of Oregon there are 216,654 people who speak English less than very well, about 5.5 percent of the population ([Link to LPRO Map of Oregon LEP Population](#)).

Oregon's Health Care Workforce Needs Assessment (2023) discusses the status of Oregon's health care interpreter workforce along with future needs ([link](#) to report; see page 59). Interpreters must complete a training program approved by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to become qualified or certified ([link](#) to OHA Health Care Interpreter Program). The Oregon Council on Health Care Interpreters (OCHCI) advises OHA on administrative rules and policy standards ([link](#) to OCHCI). For Oregon Health Plan members with limited English proficiency, interpretation may be provided by certified or qualified interpreters who work for agencies that contract with Coordinated Care Organizations.