



Interpreters and Translators, Inc.

**Public Hearing Testimony  
Public Health Committee**

**February 20, 2015**

**RAISED BILL No. 856: AN ACT CONCERNING LANGAUGE INTERPRETERS IN HOSPITALS**

Interpreters and Translators, Inc. (iTi), a language service company located in Manchester, Connecticut, **supports** the overall intent of Raised Bill No. 856: An Act Concerning Language Interpreters in Hospitals. The amendment to Section 19a-490i of the Connecticut General Statues is a promising start to addressing health care concerns for the citizens of Connecticut who must rely on others for communication when they are most vulnerable. iTi shares the Legislature’s commitment to provide the best possible care for non-English speaking individuals.

iTi supports the proposed amendment in order to **ensure** the availability of interpreter services to Limited English Proficient (LEP) patients, however, current law does not **define** what a “qualified interpreter” is. This leaves the definition of who is a qualified interpreter to the discretion of the individual hospital. **Simply being bilingual does not mean an individual is qualified to interpret in the medical setting.** The proportion of errors of clinical consequence is significantly lower for professional interpreters compared to utilizing ad hoc interpreters (family members, friends or staff members) for language services.<sup>1</sup> Ad hoc interpreters, which are frequently used in hospitals across the state, lack the high-level linguistic skills necessary to interpret in a medical setting and are likely to misinterpret critical information and commit confidentiality breaches.<sup>2</sup>

Professional medical interpreters, with exceptional language skills and an understanding of the complexities of medical terminology, also possess the cultural competency and sensitivity necessary to

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<sup>1</sup> Flores, G., et al (2012) Errors of Medical Interpretation and Their Potential Clinical Consequences: A Comparison of Professional Versus Ad Hoc Versus No Interpreters, *Annals of Emergency Medicine*, 60,p. 550.

<sup>2</sup> Gany, F., Kapelusznik, L., Prakash, K., Gonzalez, J., Orta, L., Tseng, CH., Changrani, J. (2007). The impact of medical interpretation methods on time and errors, *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 22, 319.



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break down language barriers and facilitate effective communication and understanding between the doctor and patient. Professional interpreters decrease communication errors, increase patient comprehension, equalize health care utilization, improve clinical outcomes, and increase satisfaction with communication and clinical services for LEP patients.<sup>3</sup>

Professional, medical interpreters must be used in order to ensure the patient clearly understands their diagnosis and clinical errors are avoided. iTi suggests defining qualified interpreters as those who have (1) completed a nationally recognized Healthcare Interpreter Training Program that adheres to the standards set forth by the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care, (2) passed a language assessment to verify proficiency in English and a foreign language, or (3) have been properly vetted by a professional Language Service Company.

iTi would be happy to work with the members of the Public Health committee to answer any questions regarding language services and to amend the language of Raised Bill No. 856 so that quality language services are provided to all patients.

Thank you.

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<sup>3</sup> Karliner, L., et al (2006). Do Professional Interpreters Improve Clinical Care for Patients with Limited English Proficiency? A Systematic Review of the Literature, *Health Services Research*, 42, p. 748