

Executive Summary: Health Impact Review of SB 5304

Testing individuals who provide language access to state services (2023 Legislative Session)

Evidence indicates that SB 5304 may limit the pool of DSHS certified medical interpreters, which would likely decrease access to professional medical interpretation services, worsen health outcomes, and increase health inequities for people who have a non-English language preference.

BILL INFORMATION

Sponsors: Saldaña, Nguyen, Nobles, Valdez, Wilson, C.

Summary of Bill:

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to develop and administer oral and written tests to ensure all language access providers are fluent in English and a primary non-English language.
- Outlines DSHS testing requirements to include evaluation of language competence, interpreting performance skills, understanding of the interpreter's role, and knowledge of DSHS policies regarding confidentiality, accuracy, impartiality, and neutrality.
- Changes a requirement for when DSHS may offer spoken language interpreter testing.

HEALTH IMPACT REVIEW

Summary of Findings:

This Health Impact Review found the following evidence for provisions in SB 5304:

Pathway 1: Testing requirements

- **Informed assumption** that requiring DSHS to develop and administer certain language access testing will limit the pool of medical interpreters certified by DSHS. This assumption is based on information from key informants and interpreter services contract fill rates.
- **A fair amount of evidence** that limiting the pool of medical interpreters certified by DSHS will decrease access to professional medical interpretation services for people who have a non-English language preference.
- **Strong evidence** that decreasing access to professional medical interpretation services will worsen health outcomes for people who have a non-English language preference.
- **Strong evidence** that worsened health outcomes will increase health inequities for people who have a non-English language preference.

Pathway 2: Statewide fill rate

- **Unclear evidence** how changing a requirement for when DSHS may offer spoken language interpreter testing may impact health and equity for people who have a non-English language preference.

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FULL REVIEW

For review methods, logic model, strength-of-evidence analyses, and citations of empirical evidence refer to the full Health Impact Review at

<https://sboh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-02/HIR-2023-03-SB%205304.pdf>

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