



March 29, 2016

Health and Human Services Reform Committee
Chair: Representative Tara Mack
200 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

Honorable Members of the Committee,

The Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans (“the Council”) submits this letter in support of H.F. 2345, a proposal to establish a tiered registry system for spoken language health care interpreters. As the state agency charged with advising you on behalf of 260,000+ Minnesotans descended from more than 40 Asian nations, the Council keenly understands the importance of interpreters in the field of health care. This understanding is further magnified by the fact that more than 30 percent of Asian Pacific Minnesotans who speak English “less than very well” are considered Limited English Proficient (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey).

Throughout the years, we have heard from community members that health care interpreters need to be systematically required and supported to provide more accurate and succinct interpreting, especially in health care where misunderstandings can have deadly consequences. Additionally, community members and professionals agreed that just because someone is bilingual does not mean that they have the full capacity to interpret at all. Our own personal experiences and stories shared by community members reaffirmed this widely held belief. Additionally, our Council is confident in the process and findings outlined by the Department of Health in its 2015 report to the Legislature, *Interpreting in Health Care Settings: Recommendations for a Tiered Registry*. Thus, we commend Representative Hamilton for addressing this issue by carrying H.F. 2345. As Minnesota becomes increasingly diverse, the demand for well-trained interpreters grows.

Currently, with the myriad of trained and untrained interpreters, many members of our community believe they are not receiving the quality of interpreting they deserve; thus, they rely on family members rather than interpreters, or they rely on the latter with limited confidence in the system. Addressing these and other beliefs and concerns of stakeholder groups will have a tremendous impact on the state’s ability and capacity to meaningfully address health disparities in communities across socioeconomic, gender, and generational lines.

For the reasons we shared here and more, we ask that you give careful consideration to H.F. 2345. If our office can be of further assistance on this issue, please do not hesitate to call on us.

Sincerely,

Sia Her
Executive Director
651-757-1741