

Robert R. Redfield, M.D.
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

December 17, 2020

Dear Dr. Redfield,

The undersigned organizations, representing spoken and signed language interpreters, language service companies, and language access advocates, write to urge the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to explicitly include on-site medical interpreters among the listed examples of health care personnel (HCP) eligible for Phase 1 vaccinations, and to include on-site interpreters in other settings (community interpreting, educational interpreting, state and local government offices, court and interpreters in legal or administrative law settings) among “other essential workers” per the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). We note that these front-line personnel are not included in either the CDC guidance or the CISA guidance. There are encouraging signs that states are including interpreters in HCP, from Massachusetts, Minnesota, and North Carolina; we urge that these positive steps be reinforced with messaging from the CDC.

On-site medical interpreters perform lifesaving and essential work, in direct contact with patients and other health care professionals. As you are aware, the Bureau of the Census indicates that more than 65 million American citizens and residents speak a language other than English at home, and more than 13 million are Limited English Proficient, speaking minimal English, or not at all. Under §1557 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, as well as EO 13166, individuals who do not speak English are entitled to language access services when receiving medical care. Medical interpreters save lives and improve medical outcomes for some of America’s most vulnerable patients.

If you or your staff should have further questions, they may be directed to Mr. Ted Wozniak, President, American Translators Association, president@atanet.org, and to William P. Rivers, Ph.D, Principal, WP Rivers & Associates, Bill@wpriversassociates.com. Additionally, please feel free to contact the organizations joining this letter.

Sincerely,



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American Translators Association

American Association on Health and Disability

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Association of Language Companies

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TAALS – The American Association of Language Specialists

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