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August 28, 2017

Highline Medical Center - Legal Department  
16251 Sylvester Rd. SW  
Burien, WA 98166

To whom it may concern:

We write today to express serious concerns about Highline Medical Center's (HMC) abdication of its legal responsibility to ensure that limited English proficient community members and patients have equal access to pertinent information regarding hospital services and financial assistance.

Columbia Legal Services, a non-profit public interest law firm, retained an independent entity, the Equal Rights Center, to conduct a comprehensive survey of the availability of financial assistance to Spanish-language speakers in hospitals throughout Washington State. ERC used paired civil rights testers to pose as prospective patients, both English- and Spanish-speaking, to measure differences in the information they received from a sample of twenty hospitals, including HMC. The testing was conducted by phone and website research.

In HMC's case, the testers reported that the operator/receptionist spoke English only and were unable to successfully transfer the caller to an interpreter or even a bilingual staff member. Perhaps most troubling, testers were hung up on repeatedly and did not receive assistance regarding Charity Care and financial assistance.

This conduct violates both federal and state law, and prevents persons in greatest need from obtaining critical information regarding health care. We urge you to immediately review your policies and practices and website, and take all steps to remedy these deficiencies without delay. Systemic denial of service to non-English proficient patients could constitute a deceptive act in violation of the Washington Consumer Protection Act.



Basic Human Needs Project • Children and Youth Project • Economic Justice Project • Institutions Project • Working Families Project

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(800) 542-0794

**Wenatchee**  
300 Okanogan Ave, Suite 2A  
Wenatchee, WA 98801  
(800) 572-9615

**Yakima**  
600 Larson Building  
6 South Second Street  
Yakima, WA 98901  
(800) 631-1323

Please respond within 30 days regarding this issue and describe steps that will be taken to ensure that non-English proficient patients will receive equal access to Charity Care and other services.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "D. Ty Duhamel" followed by a long horizontal line.

D. Ty Duhamel, Attorney  
Tony Gonzalez, Attorney