



Working for Justice Since 1967

[columbialegal.org](http://columbialegal.org)

August 28, 2017

Mr. John Serle, President & CEO  
Lourdes Medical Center  
520 N 4th Ave.  
Pasco, WA 99301

Dear Mr. Serle:

We write today to express serious concerns about Lourdes Medical Center's (LMC) 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 LMC. The testing was conducted by phone and website research.

In LMC's case, the testers reported that the operator/receptionist spoke English only and were unable to successfully transfer the caller to a bilingual staff member. Perhaps most troubling, a tester was told "I don't speak Spanish" following which the call was abruptly disconnected.

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.

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 that reads "D. Ty Duhamel".

D. Ty Duhamel, Attorney  
Tony Gonzalez, Attorney



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

Kennewick  
7103 W Clearwater Ave, Ste C  
Kennewick, WA 99336  
(888) 201-9735

Olympia  
711 Capitol Way S, Suite 304  
Olympia, WA 98501  
(800) 260-6260

Seattle  
101 Yesler Way, Suite 300  
Seattle, WA 98104  
(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