

**Testimony to the Thirty-Second State Legislature
2023 Regular Session**

Senate Committee on Judiciary

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair

Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 2, 2023, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 016 & Via Videoconference

by:

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Supreme Court Committee on Court Interpreters and Language Access:

Subcommittee on Interpreter Fees

Terri Gearon, Ayano Nishimura (co-chairs)

Suzanne Zeng (member)

Cristina Arsuaga (member)

Hattie Embernate (member)

Bill No. and Title: Senate Bill No. 813, Relating to Court Interpreters.

Purpose: Requires the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court interpreters. Appropriates funds.

**Supreme Court Committee on Court Interpreters and Language Access
Subcommittee on Interpreter Fees' Position:**

The Supreme Court Committee on Court Interpreters and Language Access: Subcommittee on Interpreter Fees is hereby providing testimony in strong support of S.B. 813, Relating to Court Interpreters.

Court interpreters play a crucial role in the judiciary. In Hawaii, they provide interpreting services in 50 different languages, ensuring equal access to justice by allowing limited English proficiency (LEP) persons to meaningfully participate in their cases. Court interpreters are not just people who happen to be familiar with a language other than English. They must possess high-level or native language skills in all working languages, a broad vocabulary, knowledge of the law, understand cultural nuances, have the ability to listen and speak at the same time, have excellent notation and memory skills, and follow strict ethical standards, among other things. Honing and improving these skills requires constant studying and training--another ethical requirement for court interpreters.

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 813, Relating to Court Interpreters
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Thursday, February 2, 2023
Page 2

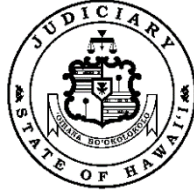
Unfortunately, the current pay scale for court interpreters of all tiers does not reflect these important contributions and specialized skills, as the last pay increase for court interpreters in Hawaii went into effect in 2007. This sixteen year pay rate stagnation has occurred during a period of time that has seen price of housing, fuel, transportation, food and medical care skyrocket in Hawaii. Simply put, a significant increase that properly reflects inflation and changes in cost of living for our locality is long overdue for these indispensable and crucial workers.

Additionally, a failure to provide fair and competitive compensation for court interpreters makes it more difficult for the judiciary to attract and retain the most competent and experienced interpreters available in the state, as they will choose better remunerated employment elsewhere.

The Subcommittee Regarding Interpreter Fees of the Supreme Court Committee on Court Interpreters and Language Access is currently addressing this exact issue, and will be presenting its report to the Supreme Court shortly.

As S.B. No. 813 addresses the same issues and its intent is in line with the findings and opinions of the Subcommittee, we hereby reiterate our strong support.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i

**Testimony to the Thirty-Second State Legislature
2023 Regular Session**

Senate Committee on Judiciary
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 2, 2023, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 016 & Via Videoconference

by:

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Debi Tulang-De Silva
Program Director
Office on Equality and Access to the Courts

Bill No. and Title: Senate Bill No. 813, Relating to Court Interpreters.

Purpose: Requires the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court interpreters. Appropriates funds.

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary supports the intent of Senate Bill No. 813, which would provide for an increase in the rates paid to court interpreters in the Hawai'i State Courts.

The Office on Equality and Access to the Courts administers the Court Interpreter Certification Program, which recruits, screens, trains, tests and qualifies interpreters to provide language services in the Hawai'i State Courts.

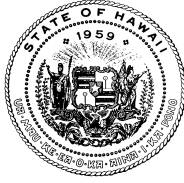
Court interpreters provide essential language services that help ensure access to justice for court users with limited English proficiency. Interpreting is a highly specialized field that requires near-native fluency in both English and the non-English language, knowledge of legal terminology and court procedure, skill in the three modes of interpretation--consecutive and simultaneous interpreting and sight translation--and adherence to the court interpreter code of

ethics. Court interpreters are valued professional partners in providing language access in the Hawai'i State Courts.

The Judiciary agrees that a rate adjustment is warranted. Court interpreters should be paid fairly for their work. Interpreter pay rates were last adjusted when the Court Interpreter Certification Program was established in 2007. In July 2022, the Supreme Court Committee on Court Interpreters and Language Access, which sits in an advisory capacity to the Court, established a subcommittee on court interpreter fees that has been working on this issue.

While recognizing the importance of interpreter pay raises, the Judiciary respectfully requests that any appropriations to address the fiscal impact of this measure not supplant the Judiciary's existing funding and current budget requests.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS**

1177 Alakea Street, Room B-100
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
Phone: (808) 586-8730 / Fax: (808) 586-8733
doh.ola@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 813
RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS**

SENATOR KARL RHOADS, CHAIR
SENATOR MIKE GABBARD, VICE CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Hearing Date: 2/2/2023

Room Number: Conference Room 016

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** Unspecified general fund appropriations.
- 2 **Agency's Position:** The Office of Language Access (OLA) supports the intent of this measure
- 3 and defers to the judiciary for any substantive recommendations to this measure.
- 4 **Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of this measure is to require the judiciary to increase
- 5 the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court
- 6 interpreters to reflect the significant increase in the cost of living in Hawaii.
- 7 Qualified interpreters provide a critical link in clear and effective communication. Specially
- 8 trained interpreters ensure that individuals with Limited English proficiency (LEP) have
- 9 meaningful access to the information they need to make decisions that can impact their lives and
- 10 livelihood in matters related to the legal system, as well as health, welfare, education, housing,
- 11 and other matters. The ability to retain a pool of qualified interpreters is integral for LEP
- 12 individuals to successfully access the important programs, services, and activities of all
- 13 government agencies.
- 14 Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 813.

KELDEN B.A. WALTJEN
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

STEPHEN L. FRYE
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PROSECUTING ATTORNEY



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OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL NO. 813

**A BILL FOR AN ACT
RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS**

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Friday, February 2, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.
Via Videoconference
State Capitol Conference Room 016
415 South Beretania Street

Honorable Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary. The County of Hawai'i, Office of the Prosecuting Attorney submits the following testimony in support of Senate Bill No. 813.

This bill was drafted with the intention to increase compensation, including hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rates, for court interpreters and provide the necessary funding for such increases during fiscal years 2023-2024 and 2024-2025.

Court interpreter compensation rates have not been meaningfully adjusted to reflect the substantial increase in the cost of living and the demand for available trained professionals since the inception of the program in 2007.

Court interpreters play an integral role in the administration of justice within Hawai'i's criminal justice system. They ensure equal access to justice by aiding those with limited-English proficiency, or who are unable to hear, understand, or speak English.

Hawai'i is a culturally enriched State. It is important that our judicial system is also supportive of our ethnic diversities and ensures that all involved parties are able to participate and communicate effectively and equally in court proceedings. Services provided by court interpreters are essential to the pursuit of justice with integrity and commitment, which is the mission statement of our Office.

For the foregoing reasons, the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Hawai'i, supports Senate Bill No. 813. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



To: Committee on Judiciary

Hearing Date/Time: Thursday February 2, 2023 10:00 AM

Re: Testimony in Strong Support of SB 813

From: Heather Lusk, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHHRC) supports *SB 813* which would require the Judiciary to increase hourly fees, mileage and other reimbursement rates and compensation rates for court interpreters.

As an appointed member to the Access to Justice Commission, I am very aware of the huge need for interpreters and compensation has not kept up with demand, which makes it challenging to fill interpreter slots.

HHHRC's mission is to *reduce harm, promote health, create wellness and fight stigma in Hawaii and the Pacific*. We focus our efforts on those disproportionately affected by social determinants of health, including but not limited to: people living with and/or affected by HIV, hepatitis, substance use, and the transgender, LGBTQ and the Native Hawaiian communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Heather Lusk, Executive Director, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 813

Thursday, February 2, 2023
Conference Room 016 & Videoconference

To: The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary

From: The Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights
Co-Chairs Amy Agbayani and Pat McManaman

The Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights works to achieve equity, justice, inclusion, uphold civil rights, and eliminate discrimination.

Senate Bill 813 seeks to increase the hourly compensation fees, standard mileage reimbursement rates, and commuter compensation time for independent contractors providing interpretation services in court proceedings for limited English proficient persons. We **Support S.B. 813** but take no position regarding the specific terms of the proposed compensation.

The Hawai'i State Judiciary provided oral interpretation in 10,959 court proceedings in FY 2019.¹ To meet the demand, the Judiciary maintains a roster of over 463 interpreters whose qualifications range from “registered” to “certified master.”² In 2016, the Hawai'i Judiciary, under the leadership of Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald, ranked first in the nation among all

¹ Hawai'i State Judiciary Language Access Plan for Persons with Limited English Proficiency – FY 2022- 2024, https://www.courts.state.hi.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/language_access_policy.pdf, accessed 1/30/2023.

² Hawai'i State Judiciary Court Interpreter Registry and Tiers of Court Interpreter Designation, <https://www.courts.state.hi.us/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/interpreters.pdf>, accessed 1/30/2023.

courts in the provision of language access services. Since then, Hawai'i continues to be a leader across the national court systems.

Hawai'i's trained court interpreters play a key role in the administration of justice in our courts. Due process means being informed of the charges against you in a language you can understand, being able to communicate with your with legal counsel in a language you understand, and being able to understand the full range of proceedings in a language you understand.

Hawai'i's court-appointed interpreters deserve your consideration for fair compensation taking into consideration Hawai'i's increased cost of living since 2007.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



www.hicir.org | Instagram @hicir
hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB813
RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: February 2nd, 2023

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR) is in full **support of SB813**, which requires the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court interpreters. SB813 is a crucial piece of legislation aimed at recognizing the integral role that court interpreters play in the administration of justice in the State for non-English speakers while acknowledging that the increase in cost of living affects court interpreters as their compensation remains the same since 2007.

Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that all recipients (state agencies and departments included) of federal funds “take reasonable steps to make their programs, services, and activities accessible by eligible persons with limited English proficiency.”¹ While the Hawai‘i State Judiciary has been a model for other states in providing language services, it now struggles to provide interpretation due to staffing shortages.² For justice to be served, regardless of race, home of origin, or economic status- it is imperative that compensation for court interpreters be commensurate with the local cost of living and the professional skills they provide.

Court interpreters provide interpretation services that enable non-English speaking defendants to exercise their constitutional and statutory rights in court. This bill will benefit court interpreters and ensure that non-English speaking defendants receive fair and equal treatment in court. The role of court interpreters in narrowing language barriers cannot be overstated. With the passage of SB813, the State of Hawaii is taking a step towards ensuring that justice is served to all.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

Liza Ryan Gill
Coordinator/Refounder, Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights

¹ <https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/special-topics/limited-english-proficiency/index.html>

² <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2022/07/04/hawaii-news/judiciary-in-need-of-more-court-interpreters/>



HAWAI'I STATE
**COALITION AGAINST
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

February 2, 2023

Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary:

Chair Karl Rhoads
Vice Chair Mike Gabbard
Sen. Brandon J.C. Elefante
Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura
Sen. Brenton Awa

Re: SB813 Relating to Court Interpreters

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary:

The Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) addresses the social, political, and economic impacts of domestic violence on individuals, families, and communities. We are a statewide partnership of domestic violence programs and shelters.

On behalf of HSCADV and our 28 member programs statewide, I respectfully submit testimony in **support of SB813**, which requires the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commute-time compensation rate for court interpreters.

Court interpreters play an important role in the judicial process and allow for non-English speakers to exercise their right to defend themselves and participate in the judicial system. For survivors of domestic violence, court interpreters play a fundamental role in their access to justice and allow their voices to be heard in court proceedings. Court interpreters should receive adequate compensation for the great work that they do for the advancement of victims and justice as a whole.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Sincerely,
Angelina Mercado, Executive Director



The Legal Clinic
Testimony in SUPPORT of SB813
RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

LATE

February 2, 2023 | 10 am | Conference Room 016

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

The Legal Clinic (“TLC”) submits testimony in **SUPPORT of SB813**, which requires the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court interpreters. SB813 is a crucial legislation aimed at recognizing the integral role that court interpreters play in the administration of justice in the State for non-English speakers while acknowledging that the increase in cost of living affects court interpreters as their compensation remains the same since 2007. The role of court interpreters in narrowing language barriers cannot be overstated.

TLC provides immigration legal services to Hawai‘i’s low-income immigrant and migrant communities, to help keep families unified, and to promote residents’ economic self-sufficiency, longer-term security, and civic engagement. As an organization that witnesses first-hand the significant contributions that interpreters make to the lives of migrants navigating complex court systems, we believe that the passage of SB813 is a step towards ensuring that justice is served to all.

Legal proceedings can be confusing for anyone, especially non-English speakers. Court interpreters serve as a conduit to ensure that non-English speakers fully understand the proceedings, make sure that messages are conveyed correctly, and provide services that enable non-English speaking defendants to exercise their constitutional and statutory rights in court. This bill will benefit court interpreters and ensure that non-English speaking defendants receive fair and equal treatment in court.

We humbly request the passage of SB813.

Mahalo nui for your time and consideration,

Bettina Mok
Executive Director
The Legal Clinic
director@thelegalclinchawaii.org

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB813
RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair**

Hearing Date: February 2, 2023

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of SB813, which requires the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court interpreters.

SB813 recognizes the integral role that court interpreters play in the administration of justice in the State for those with limited English proficiency, while acknowledging that the increases in the cost of living adversely affect court interpreters. Their compensation has not been increased since 2007.

Court interpreters enable clients to exercise their constitutional and statutory rights in court. This bill will help to ensure that those with limited English proficiency receive fair and equal treatment in court. The role of court interpreters in narrowing language barriers cannot be overstated.

With the passage of SB813, the State of Hawai'i is taking a step towards ensuring that justice is served to all.

Thank you for your consideration,
C. Sakuda

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Committee on Judiciary

M. Cristina Arsuaga
Federally Certified and State of HI Master Spanish Court Interpreter
Contact number: 917 387 4617
Carsuaga1@icloud.com

Thursday, February 2, 2023

Support for S.B. No. 813, Relating to Court Interpreters

My name is Cristina Arsuaga, Federally Certified and State of HI Master Spanish Court Interpreter. I am also a member of the Supreme Court Committee on Court Interpreters and Language Access (CILA) and its Subcommittee Regarding Interpreter Fees, and the Advisory Council for the Office of Language Access (OLA). As a professional interpreter with 34 years of experience in the field, I am hereby testifying in support S.B. No. 813, relating to Court Interpreter Compensation and Reimbursement Rates.

Judicial court interpreters have not received any pay increase, mileage, or cost-of-living adjustment in HI since 2007. During the same period, the cost of housing, transportation, fuel, health insurance and food have risen significantly both nationally as well as in Hawaii, as reflected in increases to Social Security benefits, most notably, 5.9% for 2022, and 8.7% for 2023, the largest in over 40 years. As a result, when factoring inflation and cost of living adjustments, interpreters in Hawaii are earning significantly less than they did in 2007 for their work with the courts.

Dispensing justice fairly, equally and accurately is a cornerstone of the judiciary. Anything that may hinder or deny LEP persons equal and meaningful access to justice undermines this cornerstone. A failure to provide fair and competitive compensation for court interpreters makes it more difficult for the judiciary to attract and retain the most competent and experienced interpreters available in the state, as they will choose employment elsewhere. The result is that LEPs may be denied meaningful and equal access to justice.

Additionally, court interpreters are extremely cost-efficient for the state, as their services are only retained on an as-needed basis, and, as contract workers, they do not receive benefits such as vacation, medical insurance and pensions.

For these reasons, as well as others the CILA Subcommittee Regarding Interpreter Fees will present in the coming months to the Supreme Court, I reiterate my strong support for this bill.

SB-813

Submitted on: 1/31/2023 10:23:42 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/2/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chou L Tanhchaleun	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support bill SB813.

It is long overdue.

Thank you very much

SB-813

Submitted on: 1/31/2023 10:40:40 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/2/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thaddeus Pham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

As a concerned citizen and public health professional, I am writing in support of SB813, which requires the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court interpreters.

SB813 is a crucial legislation aimed at recognizing the integral role that court interpreters play in the administration of justice in the State for non-English speakers while acknowledging that the increase in cost of living affects court interpreters as their compensation remains the same since 2007.

As we experienced during the early COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the healthcare industry, access to consistent, low-barrier social services such as interpretation has impact on promoting both public health and economic health. We need to ensure such services by paying interpreters a sustainable wage.

Court interpreters provide interpretation services that enable non-English speaking defendants to exercise their constitutional and statutory rights in court. This bill will benefit court interpreters and ensure that non-English speaking defendants receive fair and equal treatment in court. The role of court interpreters in narrowing language barriers cannot be overstated.

With the passage of SB813, the State of Hawaii is taking a step towards ensuring that justice is served to all.

With aloha,

Thaddeus Pham (he/him)

SB-813

Submitted on: 1/31/2023 11:07:02 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/2/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christy MacPherson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

I am in strong support of SB813. This is a matter of equity. We need court interpreters to be compensated fairly so they can continue to provide a most necessary service for members of our community.

Mahalo.

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB813
RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair

Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: February 2, 2023

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing **in support of SB813**, which requires the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court interpreters.

Court interpreters provide interpretation services that enable non and limited-English speaking defendants to exercise their constitutional and statutory rights in court. Without an interpreter, they will not have a voice. Interpreters play a crucial part of the justice system.

I have been a court interpreter and a trainer of court interpreters since the certification program started in 2007. As a member of the Supreme Court Committee on Court Interpreters and Language Access Subcommittee on Interpreter Fees, we have been researching other states and have seen that court interpreters nationwide have recently, or are going to receive rate increases. I personally know a number of excellent interpreters who will not take court interpreting jobs directly with the court, simply because they can get paid more doing other types of interpreting in the community. If our limited English speaking defendants, witnesses, and victims are to have true justice, they need outstanding interpreters who can interpret accurately on a very high level in a high-stakes arena. SB813 is important in that higher pay attracts higher quality. Court interpreters' compensation has remained the same over the past 16 years. It is time for an increase.

This bill will benefit court interpreters and ensure that non-English speaking defendants receive fair and equal treatment in court. The role court interpreters play in seeking "justice for all" cannot be overstated.

Thank you for your support in passing SB813,

Suzanne M Zeng

Marcella Alohalani Boido, M. A.
Hawai'i State Judiciary Certified Spanish Court Interpreter (Tier 4)
Resident & Voter, Senate District 10, House District 23

SB 813, Support, with an amendment

Committee on Judiciary: Sen. Karl Rhoads, Chair; Sen. Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Hearing: February 2, 2023, 10 a.m., Room 016

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for hearing this bill. As it points out, hourly fees for interpreters have remained static since 2007. The Judiciary regularly tries to recruit more people, and regularly fails to recruit the group that it needs the most: speakers of Chuukese and Marshallese. In a Judiciary-interpreter meeting several years ago, I compared this to fishing without any bait.

Chuukese and Marshallese are the two languages in greatest demand, as of the 2015 report from the Judiciary...a report which *should* be updated yearly. The next three are Ilokano, and depending on the court circuit, Korean and Spanish in fourth or fifth place. The small number of Tier 1 interpreters in Chuukese and Marshallese remains relatively stable from year to year. Some on the [Registry](#) do not work in court at all.

None of the people working in these high demand languages can earn a living at current rates. They are compelled to work at other jobs, or depend on relatives or welfare. Some people who could work in court opt to work in places where they have full-time work, benefits, maybe even a career path. Even fast-food places and 7-11s, and stores such as Walmart, are better options.

There is a seventh, unpublished tier, optimistically named "Transitional." These bilinguals scored between 60—69% correct on the [Written English](#) test. The passing score in Hawaii is 70%. (The National Center for State Courts recommends 80% correct as the standard.) Chuukese and Marshallese "Transitional" bilinguals earn the same as those in Tier 1, and often work about the same number of hours.

The Transitional group should be included in this bill, and their hourly pay should be raised to \$30/hour from the current \$25. Creating a pay differential between Transitional and Tier 1 people is fair. It gives the Transitional group an incentive to study so they can test into Tier 1.

The Judiciary "fills in" with bilinguals working for Dr. Suzanne Richardson Zeng. I hear she pays \$40/hour. They have no financial incentive to enter the Judiciary's program. Of course, she charges more for their services. The Judiciary is therefore paying more money for people who may be less qualified than the Transitional and Tier 1 groups. Since they have not gone through the Judiciary program, they have not taken and passed the Written English and ethics exams. Their objective, test-based qualifications are unknown to the Judiciary.

Raising the pay for court interpreters as recommended in this bill will enable the Judiciary to better recruit to fill Hawaii's needs. Hawaii's Limited English population will be better served. It will improve retention, it is fair, and also long, long, long overdue.

Thank you for your kokua.

SB-813

Submitted on: 2/1/2023 6:31:01 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/2/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sililo Grey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha and Talofa,

Hope all is well. Please support this bill. I have been an interpreter for the state of Hawaii since 2014. I really enjoyed being an interpreter but the cost of living, Covid19 and especially inflation has made it almost impossible to make a living as an interpreter. We haven't seen any raise to the rates for a very long while now.

Again, Please Pass Bill SB813.

Mahalo and Faafetai lava.

SB-813

Submitted on: 2/1/2023 7:24:18 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/2/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Raiza Dalofin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you so much Senator Inouye for introducing this bill. Learning a language is not as easy as some people may think, especially at a point where you have to *interpret* at the courts. The pay raises stated in the bil reflect the difficulty of learning a language, and hold court interpreters to a higher standard. This would also entice more qualified individuals to sign up to become an interpreter, which woul then help LEP gain more access to their rights in the court system.
Strong Support!

SB-813

Submitted on: 1/30/2023 4:19:42 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/2/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gerard Silva	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

When you are in America you are required to speak English if you do not then you do not belong in America!!!!

LATE

SB-813

Submitted on: 2/1/2023 7:49:39 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/2/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiffany Lightfoot	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Qualified interpreters are a valuable workforce and have patiently waited for this support. Mahalo for prioritizing this measure for Hawaii's judiciary system. Please accept this testimony in support of SB 813.

LATE

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee on the Judiciary:

I would like to thank you for this opportunity to testify in favor of SB 813, Relating to Court Interpreters. My name is Victor Saymo, a court interpreter. I believe this bill is an overdue solution to an inequitable situation that has existed for years. It has been fifteen years since the pay structure for court interpreters was established, way back in 2007, and the cost of living has soared significantly in those fifteen years. Court interpreters want to help the growing community of Hawaii residents who are limited in their English language ability have their day in court. However, the low pay and high prices of basic necessities such as food and gasoline make it difficult to provide judicial linguistic services without suffering a negative cash flow. Gasoline now costs almost \$5 a gallon, and news reports are predicting further increases.

Of particular concern is the fact that court interpreters are reimbursed for mileage at a rate far below the federal and state government rate. The result is that when traveling for court assignments, interpreters lose money compared to employees who travel on work assignment for their companies or government agencies.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Honorable members of the Committee to support this bill.

Victor Saymo
808-339-1968
victorulzonico@aol.com



HAWAII WORKERS CENTER

Defending and Respecting the workers of
Hawaii

LATE

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hawaiiworkerscenter.org 🌐

February 2, 2023

Hawaii State Senate
Committee on Judiciary
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Executive
Committee of the
Board

Rev. Sam Domingo
Board Chair

Mary Ochs
Vice President

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Co-Executive
Directors

Tony Doroño

Sergio Alcubilla III,
Esq.

RE: Support for S.B. 813

Dear Chair Sen. Rhoads, Vice-Chair Sen. Gabbard, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary

The Hawaii Workers Center envisions a Hawaii in which all workers are empowered to exercise their right to organize for their social, economic and political well-being. It is a resource of information, education, training and organizing for Hawaii's low-wage and immigrant workers.

The Hawaii Workers Center stands in strong support for S.B. 813 which requires the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court interpreters.

Court interpreters play an important role in the administration of justice in the State for non-English speakers. S.B. 813 also recognizes the increase in the cost of living here in Hawaii and its impact on court interpreters as their compensation has remained the same since 2007.

In 2020 at the height of the pandemic, hundreds of residents were ticketed for infractions of the stay-at-home order. The Hawaii Workers Center helped organize an expungement clinic to help residents with limited-English proficiency clear these infractions from their record. It was evident that many of these residents would not have had much success navigating the legal system without the help of a court interpreter or translation of legal documents in their language.

We thank you for your consideration of strongly supporting S.B. 813.

Sincerely,

Sergio J. Alcubilla
Executive Director