

The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i

Testimony to the Thirty-Second Legislature, 2024 Regular Session

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

Thursday, January 25, 2024, 10:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 016

by:

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Bill No. and Title: Senate Bill No. 2181, Relating to Court Interpreters.

Purpose: Requires the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court interpreters. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded. Makes an appropriation.

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary supports the intent of S.B. 2181, Relating to Court Interpreters, which would provide for an increase in the rates paid to court interpreters 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,

Senate Committee Judiciary
Senate Bill No. 2181, Relating to Court Interpreters
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established a subcommittee on court interpreter fees that produced a Report and Recommendations on interpreter fees based on extensive research, which is attached to this testimony. The Judiciary understands the intent of the request for the automatic annual increase to reflect the Consumer Price Index (CPI), however, doing so would be difficult without a commensurate automatic annual increase in legislative appropriations.

The Committee's recommendations on increases to interpreter fees, mileage and commuter time rates, are included in the Judiciary's Supplemental Budget request (SB 2374). We are hopeful that those recommendations will be adopted by the Legislature. 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.

Report and Recommendations on Court Interpreter Fees

submitted by the
Subcommittee on Interpreter Fees,
Supreme Court Committee on Court Interpreters and Language Access (CILA)

June 15, 2023

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court Committee on Court Interpreters and Language Access (CILA), Subcommittee on Court Interpreter Fees, has been meeting since July 2022 to examine the current fee schedule for court interpreters and produce a report and recommendations for consideration.

Court interpreters are an integral and essential part of Hawai'i's Judiciary, and the key to providing equal and meaningful access to the courts for persons of limited English proficiency. Professional court interpreters need to be highly skilled and specialized and follow strict ethical standards, in order to fulfill their duties. However, the fee schedule for court interpreters has not changed since the Judiciary's Court Interpreter Certification Program was established in 2007. The current outdated and insufficient fee schedule, unchanged for 16 years, undermines the Judiciary's efforts to attract and retain highly qualified professional interpreters to work in the courts. The Judiciary needs to do more to attract and retain the highest-quality professional interpreters in the state. It must also have a system in place that encourages and rewards interpreters for improving their credentials and skills. Otherwise, it runs the risk of functioning below its own standard of equal justice for all.

This Subcommittee recommends that a new court interpreter fee schedule be implemented without delay, to account for inflation and cost of living adjustments since 2007. The current and proposed rates are shown below and include a 40% fee adjustment for Tier 1 interpreters, and an 80% fee adjustment for Tier 2 to Tier 6 interpreters. The disparity reflects the lower acceptable credentials for Tier 1 interpreters and would serve to incentivize these lower-skilled interpreters to strive to meet the standards of a higher tier.

PROPOSED INTERPRETER RATES

Tier	Current Interpreter Rate	Proposed Interpreter Rate	% Increase
Tier 6	\$55/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$99/hr., 2 hr. min.	80%
Tier 5	\$50/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$90/hr., 2 hr. min.	80%
Tier 4	\$45/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$81/hr., 2 hr. min.	80%
Tier 3	\$40/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$72/hr., 2 hr. min.	80%
Tier 2	\$35/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$63/hr., 2 hr. min.	80%
Tier 1	\$25/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$35/hr., 2 hr. min.	40%

This increase is reasonable and necessary in that it considers that the fee schedule has not changed since 2007, and reflects the impact of inflation and cost of living adjustments since 2007. Further, the proposed fee adjustments will help the Judiciary to recruit and retain qualified interpreters to service the Hawai'i State Courts. Note that the proposed fee schedule

is not a fee *increase*; but, rather, merely adjusts the 2007 interpreter rates for inflation and COLA to 2023.

The Subcommittee further recommends that Interpreter compensation be reviewed at least every three years. The Supreme Court Committee on Interpreters and Language Access should have a seat at the table during said review.

In addition, the mileage reimbursement for court interpreters should be adjusted annually to reflect the Internal Revenue Service standard rate. Lastly, in addition to the existing categories for commuter time for interpreters who travel farther to a court assignment, interpreters traveling 150 miles or more roundtrip for a court assignment on their home island should be paid 3 hours of travel time.

The Judiciary should seek supplemental funding from the Legislature to offset the anticipated fiscal impact of the interpreter fee adjustments, mileage reimbursement and commuter time amendments, in order to implement the proposed interpreter fee adjustments without delay.

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I. PURPOSE OF THE CILA SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERPRETER FEES

The Supreme Court Committee on Court Interpreters and Language Access (CILA) was established to address the need for statewide guidelines and procedures that ensure proper use of spoken language interpreters in state courts and broader language access issues, and to serve as a resource to Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald and Administrative Director of the Courts Rodney Maile on such matters. CILA's members include Judiciary staff and stakeholders from academia, law, business, interpreters, and the community, all of whom serve without compensation.

In July 2022, CILA established the CILA Subcommittee on Interpreter Fees, comprised of Terri Gearon (co-chair), Ayano Hara Nishimura (co-chair), Cristina Arsuaga, Hattie Embernate, and Sue Zeng, for the purpose of examining the current fee schedule for court interpreters and reporting its findings and recommendations to Chief Justice Recktenwald and the Hawai'i Supreme Court.

The Subcommittee has met regularly and expended substantial time and effort in researching and writing this report which is submitted for consideration.

II. BACKGROUND: COURT INTERPRETERS IN HAWAI'I STATE COURTS

According to U.S. census data, one in four Hawai'i residents speaks a language other than English at home, and one in eight is considered limited-English proficient (LEP). This underscores the importance of the Judiciary providing resources [for] language services for [LEP] court users each year.¹

The Judiciary provides interpreting services for LEP court users in as many as 50 languages each year, including ASL, and translations of court forms from English into as many as 10 of the languages most frequently encountered in the Hawai'i state courts. There are currently 370 interpreters speaking 51 languages listed on the Judiciary's roster.

Language interpreters play an essential role in the administration of justice. The Hawai'i state courts use interpreters when a party or witness in a court case has limited-English proficiency or cannot hear, understand, speak, or use English sufficiently to effectively participate in court proceedings. Interpreters support them in obtaining equal access to justice and help court proceedings function efficiently and effectively.²

Professional court interpreters should possess a set of very specific skills, including native-like proficiency in all working languages, knowledge of a broad range of vocabulary, including legal terminology, subject-specific terminology, slang, knowledge of the legal system, cultural nuances, idiomatic expressions, colloquialisms, ability to listen and interpret at the same time,

¹ Hawai'i State Judiciary, 2022 Annual Report 76 (2022), available at https://www.courts.state.hi.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2022_Hawaii_State_Judiciary_Annual_Report_online.pdf ("2022 Annual Report").

² *Id.*

make quick linguistic decisions, utilize predictive skills to anticipate incoming messages, preserve accuracy, intent and tone, reflect register, have excellent note-taking skills to aid short-term memory, accommodate for lack of equivalents in vocabulary, and follow strict ethical standards, among others. Honing and improving these skills requires constant studying and training--another ethical requirement for court interpreters.

Court interpreters in Hawai'i are classified in tiers according to their credentials and level of skill.³ Currently, there are six tiers for spoken language interpreters. Tier 1 Registered Interpreter is the most basic level. To achieve Tier 1 designation, a candidate must attend a two-day orientation workshop, pass a written English proficiency exam and a written court interpreter ethics exam, and clear a criminal history record check. There is no oral proficiency or interpreting skills examination, so these interpreters are merely registered, not approved or certified. To achieve the Tier 6 Certified Master level, an interpreter must have either passed the federal court certification written and oral exam, consisting of simultaneous, consecutive, and sight translation, or scored at least 80% on the [full consortium] state certification oral exam. The federal certification exam, a two-year process, has the reputation for being one of the most difficult professional certification exams in the interpreting field, with an average historical passing rate of 4-8%.⁴ Federally certified interpreters often travel internationally for conferences, and work in places like the United Nations.

The chart below shows the number of interpreters in the Hawai'i State Judiciary's Court Interpreter Certification Program by tier and the number of languages spoken by those interpreters, as of January 1, 2023.⁵

Tier	Number of Interpreters	Number of Languages Spoken
6 – Certified Master	3	2
4 – Certified	11	4
3 – Approved	6	4
2 – Conditionally Approved	35	15
1 – Registered	315	48
TOTAL	370	51

It is in the Judiciary's best interest to hire interpreters who are already highly educated, trained and experienced, as properly screening and training court interpreter candidates is extremely

³ Haw. S.Ct., Hawai'i Rules for Certification of Spoken Language Interpreters R.12 & App. A (7.1.19), available at <https://www.courts.state.hi.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/csli.pdf> ("CSLI").

⁴ See Sandro Tomasi, Compensation of Court Interpreters in the State of New York Tbl 3: Failure Rates for Court Interpreter Exams, at 18 (Apr. 2019), available at <https://najit.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Compensation-of-Court-Interpreters-in-the-State-of-New-York.pdf> ("NY Court Interpreter Compensation Study").

⁵ Data compiled by the Office on Equality and Access to the Courts, Hawai'i State Judiciary.

time-consuming and costly. It is also in the Judiciary’s best interest to have the ability to retain the services of these highly trained individuals. When highly-trained individuals are not available, the Judiciary should have a system in place that motivates and helps lower-skilled individuals achieve greater competency. Commensurate compensation is paramount to obtaining, motivating, and maintaining a proper pool of trained and experienced professional court interpreters.

III. COURT INTERPRETER FEE SCHEDULE IN HAWAII SINCE 2007 WITH INFLATION AND COST OF LIVING COMPARISONS

Unfortunately, the current pay scale for court interpreters of all tiers does not reflect these important contributions and specialized skills. Court interpreter compensation has remained unchanged since the Court Interpreter Certification Program was established in Hawai’i in 2007. This sixteen-year pay rate stagnation has occurred during a period of time that has seen the price of housing, fuel, transportation, food and medical care skyrocket in Hawai’i. 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 interpreters.

According to the national CPI inflation calculator from BLS.gov,⁶ a person making \$55/hour in 2007 makes the equivalent of \$37.21 in 2023. A person making \$25/hour in 2007 makes the equivalent of \$16.91/hour today.

Tier	Interpreter Pay Rate (January 2007)	Dollar value of 2007 Pay Rate In 2023
Tier 6	\$55	\$37.21
Tier 4	\$45	\$30.45
Tier 3	\$40	\$27.06
Tier 2	\$35	\$23.68
Tier 1	\$30	\$16.91

This translates into a 32.5% real dollar for dollar pay decrease since 2007 for court interpreters in Hawai’i. Put another way, a Tier 6 federally certified and master interpreter (the type of professional interpreter that works at the United Nations) earns in 2023 the equivalent to what a conditionally approved Tier 2 interpreter earned in 2007.

These numbers do not even take into consideration Hawai'i’s added cost of living, as they are national averages. To illustrate this point, one need not look further than the cost of owning a home in Hawai'i, which has skyrocketed since 2007. According to the Honolulu Board of Realtors, the median sales price for a single-family home was \$643,500 in 2007, compared to

⁶ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI Inflation Calculator, https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm (“BLS CPI Inflation Calculator”).

\$1,105,000 in 2022, a 72% increase—much higher than the average national cumulative inflation of 48% between 2007 and January 2023.⁷

The federal government’s 2023 locality pay adjustment for Hawai'i is 21.17% over base pay for Hawai'i, as it recognizes that in order to be competitive and attract and retain employees, it must further compensate its employees for the added cost of living here.⁸

In fact, many reputable entities place the State of Hawai'i as the #1 most expensive state in 2022. Some examples are included below:

FORBES MOST EXPENSIVE STATES 2022⁹

1. Hawaii
2. California
3. Massachusetts
4. New Jersey
5. Connecticut

CNBC MOST EXPENSIVE STATES 2022¹⁰

1. Hawaii
2. New York
3. California
4. Massachusetts
5. Oregon

WORLD POPULATION REVIEW MOST EXPENSIVE STATES 2022¹¹

1. Hawaii
2. New York
3. California
4. Massachusetts
5. Oregon

⁷ Honolulu Board of Realtors, Oahu Historical Data: Annual Residential Resales Data for Oahu (visited 6/13/23), available at <https://www.hicentral.com/oahu-historical-data.php>

⁸ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Salary Table 2023-HI (eff. 1/1/23), available at [https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/salary-tables/pdf/2023/2023-HI%20\(LEO\).pdf](https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/salary-tables/pdf/2023/2023-HI%20(LEO).pdf) (showing locality payment of 21.17% over base pay for federal employees in Hawai'i).

⁹ Forbes, Most and least expensive states to live in 2022 (Feb. 9, 2022), available at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewdepietro/2022/02/09/most-and-least-expensive-states-to-live-in-2022/>.

¹⁰ CNBC, These are America’s 10 most expensive states to live in as inflation keeps rising (Jul. 13, 2022), available at <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/07/13/these-are-americas-10-most-expensive-states-to-live-in.html>.

¹¹ World Population Review, Most expensive states to live in (updated May 2022), available at <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/most-expensive-states-to-live-in>.

MISSOURI ECONOMIC RESEARCH & INFORMATION CENTER, COMPOSITE COST OF LIVING INDEX 2023 1st Quarter¹²

1. Hawaii
2. Washington, DC
3. Massachusetts
4. California
5. New York

According to the national CPI inflation calculator from BLS.gov, a person making \$55/hour in 2007 would have to make \$81.29/hour in 2023 to have similar purchasing power as in 2007.¹³ (\$1 in 2007 equals \$1.48 today). The middle column in the table below shows the 2007 rate for each tier in today’s dollar value. The column on the right further adjusts that value to properly reflect Hawai’i’s added cost of living, as per the federal government’s locality pay adjustment calculation for Hawai’i.

Tier	Interpreter Rate In 2007	Interpreter Rate Jan. 2023 value with national inflation calculation	Interpreter Rate Jan 2023 value with national inflation and federal cost of living adjustment (21.17%) for Hawai’i
Tier 6	\$55	\$81.29	\$98.50
Tier 4	\$45	\$66.51	\$80.59
Tier 3	\$40	\$59.12	\$71.64
Tier 2	\$35	\$51.73	\$62.68
Tier 1	\$25	\$36.95	\$44.77

This Subcommittee's proposed fee schedule in the table below reflects the true value of the 2007 court interpreter fees in Hawai’i in 2023, in that it takes into account both inflation and the added cost of living in Hawai’i.

¹² Missouri Economic Research & Information Center, Composite Cost of Living Index: First Quarter 2023 (visited 6/13/23), available at <https://meric.mo.gov/data/cost-living-data-series>.

¹³ BLS CPI Inflation Calculator, *supra* note 6.

PROPOSED INTERPRETER RATES

Tier	Current Interpreter Rate	Proposed Interpreter Rate	% Increase
Tier 6	\$55/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$99/hr., 2 hr. min.	80%
Tier 5	\$50/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$90/hr., 2 hr. min.	80%
Tier 4	\$45/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$81/hr., 2 hr. min.	80%
Tier 3	\$40/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$72/hr., 2 hr. min.	80%
Tier 2	\$35/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$63/hr., 2 hr. min.	80%
Tier 1	\$25/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$35/hr., 2 hr. min.	40%

While an 80% fee increase for Tier 2-Tier 6 interpreters may seem extremely generous, the fact is that it merely reflects the lack of attention and action concerning interpreter fees for the past sixteen years. As previously stated, court interpreters today make significantly less, dollar per dollar, than interpreters in 2007. The proposed increase rightly takes into account inflation and cost of living that interpreter fees have not kept up with. Had fee adjustments been granted on a regular basis to keep up with the cost of living and inflation, this sharp increase could have been avoided. This Subcommittee's view is that interpreter fees should be reviewed periodically, perhaps every 2-3 years, in order to avoid a future repeat of the current situation.

Furthermore, the mileage reimbursement should match the rate issued by the IRS each year, and the commuter time for interpreters traveling 150 miles or more for an assignment should be increased to three hours to reflect current traffic conditions, which differ greatly from those in 2007.

As for Tier 1 interpreters, this Subcommittee strongly feels they should receive a significantly lower increase than the higher tiers. The main reason is that the standards for Tier 1 are much lower than for the other tiers, including the fact that oral language and interpreting skills exams are not required for Tier 1. It can also serve as an incentive for these individuals to obtain the necessary skills and credentials to move up to a higher tier designation.

IV. CURRENT RATES IN A SAMPLE OF OTHER STATES, RATE COMPARISON WITH HAWAI‘I, INCLUDING COST OF LIVING DIFFERENTIAL

One of the data points this Subcommittee researched was court interpreter compensation in other states. As the sample of states included in the table below will show, some states pay interpreters on an hourly basis while others pay on a half-day/full-day basis. Additionally, some states do not divide interpreters into tiers.

A number of states do not have set rates and hire interpreters through fees negotiated with language service agencies. Only states that set their own rates were included in this table.

CILA Report and Recommendations on Court Interpreter Fees

CONTRACT COURT INTERPRETER PAY RATE FY 2023 IN SELECTED STATES

	STATE	CERTIFIED RATE			NON-CERTIFIED RATE			EFFECTIVE DATE
		Hr.	½ Day	Full Day	Hr.	½ Day	Full Day	
1.	TX -Non-unified system-Travis Cty (Austin)	\$100/hr 2 hr min. for in-person. After 2 hrs, in 15 min increments						3/23/2022
2.	AZ – Non-unified syst. Maricopa Cty (Phoenix)	\$95/hr, 2 hr min. SP: Tier 4, 3 and Fed cert.	\$350	\$700	\$65/hr SP: Tier 1,2	\$220	\$400	2/27/2020
		\$95/h Lesser Used Lang. Tier 4, 3; Fed cert.	\$350	\$700	\$90/hr Tier A	\$330	\$660	
					\$80 Tier 1&2	\$300	\$600	
3.	FL – Not to exceed:	\$120/hr 2 hr min. Other lang.			\$90/hr 2 hr Other lang.			July 2018
		\$90/hr 2 hr min Haitian			\$75/hr 2 hr min., Haitian			
		\$60/hr 2 hr min. Sp.			\$45/hr 2 hr min. Sp.			
		\$100/hr ASL						
4.	District of Columbia Superior Ct.		\$320	\$566		\$280	\$495	1/1/2023
5.	Federal Court Unified Rate		\$320	\$566		\$280	\$495	

CILA Report and Recommendations on Court Interpreter Fees

	STATE	CERTIFIED RATE			NON-CERTIFIED RATE			EFFECTIVE DATE
		Hr.	½ Day	Full Day	Hr.	½ Day	Full Day	
6.	NJ		\$288.00 Master	\$494.20 Master		\$226.24	\$394.60	3/6/2023
						\$152.40 Cond. Approval	\$284.83 Cond. Approval	
7.	PA	\$80/hr 2 hr min Master/ Fed – up to 3.5 hrs=half day.		7 hrs - \$475	\$45/2 hr min Qualified			7/19/2021
		Certif- 65/2hr min			\$35/2 hr min Conditional			
			Registered 60/2hr min					
8.	AK	\$80/hr 2 hr min ASL			\$45/2 hr min			
		\$65/hr 2 hr min other						
9.	WA	\$75/hr 2 hr min in urban courts; 1 hr in small rural			\$45/hr 2 hr min urban; 1 hr in rural			March 2020
10	OR	\$65 ASL hr			\$37/hr			1/1/2022
		\$50/hr Other Lang.			\$30/hr Conditional			

Note, California interpreter fees were not included, as their freelance interpreters are unionized and considered semi-employees. They receive benefits and can participate in the state pension system.

The states of Texas, Florida and Arizona already pay interpreters rates that are similar to what this Subcommittee is proposing, although the cost of living in all three states is significantly lower than Hawai'i's. This is one of the reasons this Subcommittee believes that a locality adjustment must be considered in any court interpreter rate increase.

To illustrate this point, the Subcommittee looked at two sets of data points and placed them in the tables below. The first table, using Forbes Cost of Living Comparison Salary Calculator, shows what an hourly wage of \$55/hour (the top pay for court interpreters in Hawai'i) in different cities around the nation would have to be in Hawai'i to maintain the same standard of living as in the first location. The right column of the table shows the cost of living differential between Honolulu and each city on the left column.

FORBES COST OF LIVING COMPARISON SALARY CALCULATOR¹⁴

Salary of \$55/hr. in...	Salary equivalent in Honolulu to maintain same standard of living	% DIFFERENCE IN COST OF LIVING
Albany, NY	\$100	45% higher in HNL
Austin, TX	\$106	48% higher in HNL
Bergen, Passaic	\$87	37% higher in HNL
Boston, MA	\$70	21% higher in HNL
Buffalo, NY	\$112	51% higher in HNL
Washington, DC	\$68	19% higher in HNL
Fairbanks, AK	\$84	35% higher in HNL
Houston, TX	\$115	52% higher in HNL
Los Angeles, CA	\$70	21% higher in HNL
Miami-Dade, FL	\$89	38% higher in HNL
Philadelphia, PA	\$100	45% higher in HNL
Phoenix, AZ	\$102	46% higher in HNL
Portland, OR	\$84	35% higher in HNL
Salt Lake City, UT	\$99	44% higher in HNL
San Diego	\$73	25% higher in HNL
San Francisco, CA	\$57	4% higher in HNL
Seattle, WA	\$70	21% higher in HNL

The second table offers a more concrete example taken from up-to-date real wages paid to court interpreters (not including ASL) in select locations. It shows what the equivalent pay would be in Hawai'i with the appropriate salary cost-of-living adjustment:

¹⁴ Forbes Cost of Living Calculator, available at <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/mortgages/real-estate/cost-of-living-calculator/>. The cost of living comparison is based on income and the price of basic necessities such as housing, transportation and food in the two cities selected.

2023 INTERPRETER ACTUAL TOP RATE BY LOCATION; EQUIVALENT PAY IN HAWAI'I WITH COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT

LOCATION #1	TOP INTERPRETER RATE	HONOLULU-EQUIVALENT RATE ADJUSTED FOR COLA (FORBES, CNN MONEY)
AK (Fairbanks)	\$65/hr.	\$102/hr.
AZ (Phoenix)	\$95/hr.	\$176/hr.
FL (Naples area)	\$120 non-Spanish/hr. \$60 Spanish/hr.	\$221 non-Spanish/hr. \$110 Spanish/hr.
NJ (Newark area)	\$288.00 half day \$494.00 full day	\$440 half day \$755 full day
NJ (Bergen, Passaic)	\$288.00 half day \$494.00 full day	\$443 half day \$760 full day
NY State (Albany)*	\$170 half day \$300 full day	\$309 half day \$546 full day
NY State (Buffalo)	\$170 half day \$300 full day	\$346 half day \$611 full day
NYC (Manhattan)	\$170 half day 300 full day	\$135 half day \$238 full day
NYC (Queens)	\$170 half day \$300 full day	\$226 half day \$398 full day
NY (Nassau Cty-Long Island closest to NYC)	\$170 half day \$300 full day	\$247 half day \$436 full day
OR (Portland)	\$50/hr.	\$77/hr.
PA (Philadelphia)	\$80/hr.	\$146/hr.
UT (SLS)	\$52/hr.	\$90/hr.
TX (Travis County-Austin)	\$100/hr.	\$192/hr.
Washington, DC	\$320 half day \$566 full day	\$394 half day \$696 full day
WA (Seattle)	\$75/hr.	\$95/hr.

Note: California not included because contract interpreters are unionized, semi-employees of the state, and receive benefits which aren't accounted for in the hourly/daily rates.

*The New York State Unified Court System is an outlier in that 80% of the interpreting needs of the courts are covered by 255 full-time staff interpreters who provide services in 22 languages.¹⁵

For the states that pay on a half-day, full-day basis, a comparison to Hawaii's rates can be made by multiplying \$55 x 7 hours of work (lunch hour is not paid) for a full day. That would mean that the full day rate for a Tier 6 interpreter in Hawai'i would be \$385.

V. EFFECT OF LACK OF ADEQUATE COMPENSATION ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF COURT INTERPRETERS

Recognizing court interpreters as professional service providers possessing a unique set of special skills that are indispensable to the administration of justice and compensating them as such is absolutely necessary in order to attract and retain the most qualified candidates. This can perhaps, at least in part, explain the difficulty Hawai'i has experienced in attracting and retaining high-quality interpreters, especially for some of the most requested languages, such as Chuukese and Marshallese. When compensation is inadequate, those highly-qualified individuals may seek better remunerated and more secure employment elsewhere.

Hawai'i is not unique in facing this problem. There are many examples nationwide—in both state and federal courts—where interpreters are underpaid, that illustrate this point. For example, an internal analysis conducted in 2020 by the U.S. Courts in the New York tri-state area found that 82% of the active 78 federally certified freelancers in the tri-state area were unavailable to interpret the local District Courts on any given day. One of the main reasons stated was because “the [Administrative Office]-established contract interpreter rates are not commensurate with industry standards in the New York Metropolitan area where there is a great demand for highly competent interpreters. Many of our local [Federal Court] interpreters opt to take significantly higher-paid jobs with the USAO, the U.N., the U.S. Department of State, private entities/agencies, and civil attorneys.”¹⁶

The analysis went on to state: “The locality pay percentage authorized for Federal Court employees, if applied to contract interpreters who live and reside in the New York Metropolitan Area, would help alleviate the current shortage of local contract interpreters available to the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York and the District of New Jersey. *Non-competitive compensation, in a region where there is a great market demand for interpreters, has made it ever more difficult to attract highly competent freelancers to serve these three Courts.*”¹⁷

Although federally certified per-diem interpreters received a 35% increase for FY2023, the issue of locality pay is still under discussion, as federally certified interpreters in low-cost locations such as Jackson, Mississippi are paid the same rates as their counterparts in the New York City

¹⁵ See NY Court Interpreter Compensation Study, *supra* note 4, at 3, 16.

¹⁶ Internal Report on file with CILA Subcommittee on Interpreter Fees.

¹⁷ *Id.* (emphasis added)

metro area, where the courts are still finding it difficult to attract interpreters in its competitive market setting.

In the State of New York, even though the New York State's Unified Court System has 255 staff interpreters who provide services in 22 languages, covering up to 80% of the interpreting needs of the courts, it is also facing interpreter recruitment and retention challenges, particularly in New York City, where the cost of living can be more than twice as high as rest of the state, as the unified system pay scale does not address these huge disparities, as highlighted in this excerpt from a May 25, 2020 article in *City Limits*:

According to Legal Services NYC's survey, the shortage of interpreters in all languages in the courts is one of the most serious problems faced by non-English speaking litigants in New York. . . . For many interpreters, the low compensation they receive is a problem. Interpretation work requires many years of knowledge, a lot of practice and a lot of money invested (for the vast majority of interpreters who went to college). Because of this, many do not last on the job or move to other positions in the courts that pay better, like court clerks.¹⁸

The New York State Judiciary is well-aware of the problem, as addressed in its strategic plan for ensuring language access in the courts:

Review per diem interpreter compensation

- Adequate compensation, especially in the competitive New York City metropolitan area, is critical to the courts' ability to attract qualified per diem interpreters.
- Review per diem rates annually¹⁹

Other states in which court interpreters have unsuccessfully sought a pay increase after years of stagnant wages compensation are currently experiencing interpreter pushback. In Colorado, there was a recent walkout by court interpreters seeking to receive an increase of up to \$90/hr.²⁰ In Massachusetts, where interpreters had not received an increase since 2006 (not unlike Hawai'i), court interpreters staged a week-long walkout to raise awareness of the

¹⁸ Daniel Parra, City's courts seen lacking in interpreters, *City Limits* (May 25, 2020), available at <https://citylimits.org/2020/05/25/citys-courts-seen-lacking-in-interpreters/>.

¹⁹ NY State Unified Court System, Ensuring Language Access: A Strategic Plan for the New York State Courts 10 (Mar. 2017), available at <https://ww2.nycourts.gov/sites/default/files/document/files/2018-06/language-access-report2017.pdf>.

²⁰ Shelly Bradbury, Cohort of Colorado court interpreters walk out as pay dispute drags on, *Denver Post* (Feb. 9, 2023), available at <https://www.denverpost.com/2023/02/09/colorado-court-interpreters-pay-dispute-walkout-disruptions/>; Seyma Albarino, Colorado court interpreters mull walkout after denial of USD 10 hourly rate increase, *Slator.com* (Apr. 29, 2022), <https://slator.com/colorado-court-interpreters-mull-walkout-after-denial-of-rate-increase/>.

situation; the Massachusetts courts finally agreed to a 50% pay increase, plus a yearly cost-of-living increase.²¹

In the California non-unified court system, per diem court interpreters are considered semi-employees and can be eligible to receive many state benefits. Nevertheless, wages in the Los Angeles region have been stagnant for several years, prompting a petition sent by local interpreters on January 30, 2023, to Governor Newsom, asking for his support for a pay increase. According to the letter:

[Los Angeles Superior Court] has already lost approximately 20% of its interpreter workforce in the past 2 years because these employees are unable to support a family on their current salary, without taking on a second job. Due to an expected wave of retirements, we estimate Los Angeles Superior Court will lose about 40% of its interpreters by 2025. . . .

The Courts' response to this attrition is to lower standards by hiring non-certified interpreters. There have been untold numbers and well-documented cases of life-altering issues resulting from the lack of training and professionalism of non-certified interpreters. This "solution" is all the more egregious given there are currently over 1,300 duly certified professional and experienced interpreters available and working in the private sector, rather than the courts, due to the great disparity in pay. The courts in these three counties have been unable to attract these 1,300 certified interpreters because the wages they offer are far below market levels.²²

Lowering standards for court interpreters is not the solution when the consequences of a misinterpretation can be life-changing and devastating. Such was the case in a 2016 proceeding in Virginia in which a Spanish interpreter used the word "violación," which means rape in Spanish, instead of the correct term for a traffic violation, which is "infracción".²³

Instead, the Judiciary should endeavor to create a working environment that attracts and retains the highest-qualified language professionals in the state.

²¹ Bianca Beltran, Mass. court interpreters walk off job in call for higher pay, NBCBoston.com (Feb. 6, 2023), <https://www.nbcboston.com/news/local/mass-court-interpreters-walk-off-job-in-call-for-higher-pay/2966148/>; Dr. Michael O'Laughlin Carlisle, Letter: Until pay is adjusted, interpreters will continue to be scarce, MassLawyersWeekly.com (Jul 22, 2022), <https://masslawyersweekly.com/2022/07/22/letter-until-pay-is-adjusted-interpreters-will-continue-to-be-scarce/>.

²² Letter to Gov. Newsom, on file with CILA Subcommittee on Interpreting Fees.

²³ How bad translation by court interpreters can turn misunderstanding into injustice, PBS.org (Aug. 17, 2016), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/bad-translation-by-court-interpreters-injustice>.

VI. JUDICIARY’S INTERPRETER CASELOAD AND DISBURSEMENT; PROPOSAL OF NEW RATES AND BUDGET ALLOCATION

Court interpreters in Hawai’i are extremely cost-effective for the state, as they are all independent contractors that are hired on a need-only basis. Furthermore, they do not receive state employment benefits, such as medical insurance, vacation pay, or retirement compensation.

Below is a breakdown of top languages in the Judiciary ranked by number of proceedings and by disbursements to interpreters obtained from the Office on Equality and Access to the Courts (OEAC). The CILA Subcommittee on Interpreter Fees chose to use FY 2019 numbers, as they reflect the last complete and reliable data available before the pandemic interruption of court services from 2020 to 2022.

STATE OF HAWAII JUDICIARY TOP LANGUAGES STATEWIDE FY 2019

Rank	Language	\$ Paid	Rank	Language	# Proceedings
1	Chuukese	\$151,948.0	1	Chuukese	3,612
2	Spanish	\$131,920.6	2	Ilokano	1,220
3	Ilokano	\$89,238.89	3	Marshallese	939
4	Marshallese	\$70,445.83	4	Korean	894
5	American Sign Language	\$62,822.05	5	Spanish	878
6	Korean	\$61,564.04	6	Mandarin	616
7	Mandarin	\$58,286.11	7	Tagalog	473
8	Japanese	\$47,770.71	8	Japanese	469
9	Vietnamese	\$37,801.14	9	Vietnamese	417
10	Tagalog	\$36,453.42	10	American Sign Language	246
11	Samoan	\$23,382.15	11	Cantonese	231
12	Cantonese	\$16,410.58	12	Samoan	230
13	Tongan	\$16,085.47	13	Tongan	169
14	Pohnpeian	\$14,868.84	14	Pohnpeian	168
15	Thai	\$6,499.04	15	Kosraean	85

In FY2019, the Judiciary provided interpreters in 10,959 interpreted proceedings, at a cost of \$863,815.²⁴

If one were to divide the total payments by the number of proceedings, the average cost per interpreter per proceeding was \$78.82 in 2019.

It is important to bear in mind that although travel time is reflected in this average payment, interpreters are not compensated for any preparation for a court assignment.

This Subcommittee has proposed a 40% increase for Tier 1 interpreters, and an 80% fee increase for Tier 2-6 interpreters, plus an increase in mileage compensation. In order to calculate the amount of additional funds that would need to be appropriated to cover just the fee increases (without the additional mileage compensation), the Subcommittee requested a breakdown of fees by tier from the OEAC, which is provided below.²⁵

FY 2019 INTERPRETER EXPENDITURES BY TIER

TIER	FY 2019 FEES (\$)	FY 2019 FEES (%)
TIER 6	\$19,736.20	2.28%
TIER 4	\$86,706.05	10.04%
TIER 3	\$61,177.90	7.09%
TIER 2	\$177,515.36	20.56%
TIER 1	\$224,953.21	26.06%
OTHER*	\$293,253.33	33.97%
TOTAL	\$863,342.05	100.00%

*“Other” includes language service companies and other categories paid at Tier 1 rates.

As per the table above, nearly 60% of court interpreter expenditures in FY 2019 represent payments to Tier 1 interpreters and others paid at Tier 1 rates, while 40% of expenditures were divided among Tier 2- Tier 6 interpreters. Based on FY 2019 total expenditures, the \$518,206.54 spent on interpreters paid at Tier 1 rates, times the 40% proposed fee increase would come to \$725,489.16. The \$345,135.51 spent on Tier 2-Tier 6 interpreters, times the

²⁴ Data compiled by the Office on Equality and Access to the Courts, Hawai‘i State Judiciary and on file with the CILA Subcommittee on Interpreting Fees.

²⁵ *Id.*

80% proposed fee increase would come to \$621,243.92. The sum of \$725,489.16 plus \$621,243.92 comes to total expenditures of \$1,346,733.08 for interpreter fees after the fee adjustment. Using 2019 numbers once again, \$1,346,733.08 minus \$863,342.05 (FY 2019 total interpreter expenditures), the additional funds necessary to cover the proposed interpreter fee increase for FY 2024 comes to \$483,391.03.

2019 INTERPRETER TOTAL EXPENDITURES	TIER 1 EXPENDITURES AFTER 40% INCREASE	TIERS 2-6 EXPENDITURES AFTER 80% INCREASE	TOTAL PROJECTED 2024 INTERPRETER EXPENDITURES AFTER INCREASE	ADDITIONAL FUNDS THAT NEED TO BE ALLOCATED FOR FY 2024 INTERPRETER FEE INCREASE (not including mileage and commuter time adjustment)
\$863,342	\$725,489.16	\$621,243.92	\$1,346,733.08	\$483,391.03

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After thoughtful discussion, research and evaluation, the Supreme Court Committee on Court Interpreters and Language Access, Subcommittee on Interpreter Fees finds:

1. Court interpreters are an integral and essential part of Hawai'i's Judiciary, and the key to providing equal and meaningful access to the courts for persons of limited English proficiency. Professional court interpreters need to be highly skilled and specialized and follow strict ethical standards, in order to fulfill their duties.
2. Court interpreters have not received a rate adjustment since the Hawai'i State Judiciary Court Interpreter Certification Program was established in 2007. The current outdated and insufficient fee schedule, unchanged for 16 years, undermines the Judiciary's efforts to attract and retain highly qualified professional interpreters to work in the courts.
3. The Judiciary needs to do more to attract and retain the highest-quality professional interpreters in the state. It must also have a system in place that encourages and rewards interpreters for improving their credentials and skills. Otherwise, it runs the risk of functioning below its own standard of equal justice for all.
4. This Subcommittee recommends a 40% fee adjustment for Tier 1 interpreters, and an 80% fee adjustment for Tier 2 to Tier 6 interpreters. The disparity reflects the lower acceptable credentials for Tier 1 interpreters and would serve to incentivize these lower-skilled interpreters to strive to meet the standards of a higher tier.

PROPOSED INTERPRETER RATES

Tier	Current Interpreter Rate	Proposed Interpreter Rate	% Increase
Tier 6	\$55/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$99/hr., 2 hr. min.	80%
Tier 5	\$50/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$90/hr., 2 hr. min.	80%
Tier 4	\$45/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$81/hr., 2 hr. min.	80%
Tier 3	\$40/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$72/hr., 2 hr. min.	80%
Tier 2	\$35/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$63/hr., 2 hr. min.	80%
Tier 1	\$25/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$35/hr., 2 hr. min.	40%

5. The projected additional funds needed to cover these fee adjustments is \$483,580.00 for FY 2024, based on FY 2019 actual expenditures. This increase is reasonable and necessary in that:
 - a. It reflects the fact that interpreters have not received an increase since 2007.
 - b. It considers the national inflation rate since 2007.
 - c. It considers the added cost of living in Hawai'i.
 - d. It will help the Judiciary recruit higher quality interpreters.
 - e. It will help the Judiciary retain the most qualified interpreters, who would otherwise leave to accept better-remunerated employment.
6. The fee adjustment for court interpreters is long overdue and warranted, and should become effective as soon as possible.
7. Interpreter compensation should be reviewed at least every three years. The Supreme Court Committee on Interpreters and Language Access should have a seat at the table during said review.
8. The mileage allowance for court interpreters should be adjusted annually to reflect the Internal Revenue Service standard rate. In addition to the existing categories for commuter time for interpreters who travel farther to a court assignment, interpreters traveling 150 miles or more for an assignment should be paid 3 hours of travel time.
9. The Judiciary should seek funding from the 2024 legislative session without delay, to cover the anticipated fiscal impact for court interpreter fee adjustments



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS**

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**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2181
RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS**

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

Hearing Date: 1/25/2024

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 and to declare that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded.
- 7 Qualified interpreters provide an indispensable service in our judiciary. They are the bridge that
- 8 connects individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) to our legal system, facilitating
- 9 clear and effective communication. Without their expertise, LEP individuals could face
- 10 significant barriers in understanding legal proceedings, making informed decisions, and
- 11 effectively participating in the legal process.
- 12 The role of interpreters extends beyond the courtroom. They are crucial in ensuring that
- 13 individuals with LEP have meaningful access to vital information across various sectors, such as
- 14 health, welfare, education, housing, and more. This access is not just a matter of convenience; it
- 15 is a civil right under both State and Federal law. By aiding comprehension, interpreters empower
- 16 individuals with LEP to make informed decisions that can profoundly impact their lives and
- 17 livelihoods.

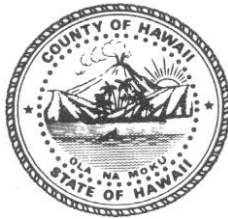
1 Furthermore, this measure aligns with the 'Report and Recommendations on Court Interpreter
2 Fees' from the Subcommittee on Interpreter Fees, Supreme Court Committee on Court
3 Interpreters and Language Access (CILA), dated June 15, 2023. The report acknowledges the
4 vital role interpreters play in our judicial system. Increasing compensation for court interpreters
5 is essential to retain a qualified pool of professionals. It will help attract and retain highly skilled
6 professionals, ensuring that individuals with LEP have meaningful access to services, programs,
7 and activities.

8 This measure is not just an investment in interpreters; it is an investment in justice, equity, and
9 the efficient functioning of our government services, programs, and activities.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 2181.

KELDEN B.A. WALTJEN
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

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OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT TO SENATE BILL NO. 2181

A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS

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

Thursday, January 25, 2024 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. 2181.

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. 2181. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2181
RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS**

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

Hearing Date: January 25, 2024

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

The Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR) is in full **support of SB2181**, which requires the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court interpreters.

SB2181 recognizes the integral role of court interpreters in the administration of justice in the State for non-English and limited English proficient speakers while acknowledging that the increase in the cost of living affects court interpreters as their compensation has remained the same since 2007.

Court interpreters provide interpretation services that enable non-English and limited English proficient speaking defendants to exercise their constitutional and statutory rights in court. To uphold the principles of Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, which mandates accessibility to programs, services, and activities for individuals with limited English proficiency, it is imperative to take substantial steps in facilitating language services.

While the Hawai'i State Judiciary has been a model for other states in providing language services, it struggles to provide interpretation due to staffing shortages.¹ To ensure justice is impartially served, court interpreters must receive compensation that aligns with the local cost of living and the professional expertise they bring to the legal proceedings.

The role of court interpreters in narrowing language barriers cannot be overstated. With the passage of SB2181, the State of Hawaii is taking a step towards ensuring that justice is served to all.

Thank you for your support and consideration,
Maria Rallojaj
Policy and Communications Coordinator

¹Cruz, Catherine. *Speak Another Language? The State Judiciary Is Looking for Court Interpreters*, Hawai'i Public Radio, www.hawaiipublicradio.org/local-news/2023-04-07/speak-another-language-the-state-judiciary-is-looking-for-court-interpreters.

SB-2181

Submitted on: 1/23/2024 5:54:31 PM

Testimony for JDC on 1/25/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
W ALIK	Testifying for One Stop Center for Micronesians on Big Island	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha!

I submit my testimony in support of SB 2181.

As Hawaii state is truly a melting pot with its rich cultural diversity and various ethnicities, it should be recognized that language access is critically needed to competently render essential services especially in healthcare. As a result, such a policy will definitely lessen the impact of health disparity that has severely crippled and marginalized many of those with limited English language proficiency. It's not only a matter of equality, fairness and compassion but by elevating one community group we're all elevated as one healthy and socioeconomic island community.

Thsnk you

SB-2181

Submitted on: 1/24/2024 8:50:45 AM

Testimony for JDC on 1/25/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Grace Larson	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Everyone!

My name is Grace Manipol-Larson. I am supporting Bill 2181. I have been a Tagalog, Visayan, and an Ilonggo interpreter since 2008. I live in Hilo, Hawaii.

On various occasions, I drove from Hilo to the old Kona courthouse before the new courthouse was built to serve the LEP and the court at the same time.

Oftentimes, my husband and I drove towards Kona through the Saddle road to have a shorter commute than going through Hamakua Coast or Naalehu road.

Either early in the morning or an afternoon drive going home from the courthouse, we went through a foggy road, sometimes even zero visibility. I consider myself lucky if it's not raining by Hilo side in the morning going to Kona via Saddle road. But for the sake of passion, dedication and service to give equal footing to the justice system to the LEP, I have to wake up as early as four o' clock in the morning if I have an appointment in Kona courthouse. It's a dangerous drive out there, I tell you.

It's still vivid in my memory, when I was pregnant with my daughter almost 12 years ago. My due date was February 27th, but I have an assignment on my birthday on February 2nd. I accepted the job because there was no other Visayan interpreter for that guy and that was a very important hearing for a mentally impaired accused in the sala of now retired Judge Floreindo.

We drove a day early so we'll have an ample time, I told my husband to stop many times because I guess the baby moved and kicked me a lot due to the high elevation in the Saddle road.

When I am assigned in Kona, I don't actually gain much financially because I booked the hotel room and ended up spending much for food. However, I am happy because we can have a family bonding and I am glad to serve my community.

I am lucky my husband supported me with my passion. But what about my other colleagues who are breadwinners, like Mr. Victor Saimo? He is an Ilokano interpreter who had a lot of clients.

I am speaking on behalf of my colleagues in the interpreting industry, it is time that we deserve a pay raise. There are countless times that I have to pull-over the car and I have to help interpret to the police officer to give a Miranda warning or any citation to a LEP client for more than thirty (30) minutes.

There were instances also that I am not paid because I forgot to give an invoice to that government agency on time. Two or three hours of commute and the waiting period is time consuming. Nevertheless, for the sake of passion and service to the community, we sacrifice a lot so we can be able to help in administering equal justice to those who need it.

On other hand, when lava came to Saddle road in 2022 and threat a longer commute, that kinda made it harder for all of us. The inflation and the high cost of gas is also a problem. Hence, it is a right time that Interpreters should receive a pay-raise and an "incentive". I support bill 2181.

Mahalo!

Hawai'i State Legislature
The Senate
Committee on Judiciary
Honorable Committee Members

January 25, 2024

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

I am Hideyuki Takahashi, a Hawaii Judiciary Registered Japanese/English Court Interpreter, and I am writing to express my strong support for SB 2181. This bill proposes to increase the compensation for court interpreters, with an appropriation as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2025, to fund the increase in the hourly rates, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation for court interpreters, effective July 1, 2024.

My support for SB 2181 is grounded in my personal experience as a court interpreter for the past decade. I would like to highlight the following reasons for my endorsement:

Vital Role of Interpreters: Interpreters play a crucial role in assisting individuals involved in court proceedings. The judicial system can be daunting and complex, especially for those with limited experience in navigating its intricacies and language. A court interpreter serves as a bridge, alleviating the fear and facilitating comprehension for non-English speakers.

Enhancing Availability: Increasing compensation for court interpreters will help in establishing a more dependable and available pool of interpreters. A higher rate of pay will attract skilled professionals, ensuring that interpreters are readily accessible when needed. Failure to provide an interpreter can result in delays and rescheduling of court proceedings, causing further disruption to the lives and schedules of those involved.

Addressing Compensation Disparities: Court interpreter compensation rates have stagnated for at least the past decade, while other stakeholders within the judicial system have seen increases in their compensation. Meanwhile, the cost of living in Hawaii has significantly risen. For instance, my hourly rate has remained at \$35.00 for the past decade.

I am grateful for the opportunity to present this written testimony to the members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary. I earnestly hope that you will wholeheartedly support SB 2181 and provide an appropriate appropriation to enable the proposed increases in court interpreter compensation, effective July 1, 2024. This adjustment is crucial to ensuring that Hawaii Judiciary registered court interpreters can continue to assist the Judiciary in maintaining a just and efficient court system that allows non-English speakers to actively participate in court proceedings.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and I look forward to the positive outcome of your deliberations.

Sincerely,

Hideyuki Takahashi
Hawaii Judiciary Registered Japanese/English Court Interpreter

SB-2181

Submitted on: 1/23/2024 10:47:58 AM

Testimony for JDC on 1/25/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lolita Quibol	Testifying for court Interpreter	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for hearing this Bill again.

However, what good is this hearing gonna bring, if you will continue to reject it in the last stage?

Whatelse do you want to hear from us? Aside from the fact that this increase is long over due and it affects the judicial system in negative ways (they cannot recuit and retain interpreters because the pay is not competitive). We are not asking for too much, we are asking what is right and due to our profession. We never had increase since 2007. Everyone got thier increase, as a matter of fact, minimum wage increased again this year.

I think instead of you hearing us, we should hear from you, **WHY CAN NOT NOT GIVE US THE INCREASE THAT IS NECESSARY AND DUE TO US?**

We can give you all the great reasons why this increase is necessary, not only to us but most specially to the people of Hawaii whom you serve. We are part of the Judiciary. This department ensures that justice is being serve, but how can justice be serve if you can not even give us what is due to us?

May God guide you to do what is right.

SB-2181

Submitted on: 1/23/2024 11:28:43 AM

Testimony for JDC on 1/25/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jun Stein	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support to increase the interpreter fee.

My name is Gunda Nollenberger, and I am writing today as a concerned fellow interpreter to testify in support of S.B. No. 2181 `Relating to Court Interpreters`.

There is a lot more to interpreting as an independent contractor than meets the eye as far as professionalism and integrity is concerned. The right to a fair trial is one of the cornerstones of the American legal system. Court interpreters work closely with clients and law officers to relay accurate, reliable and unbiased information from the actual context. A court interpreter must thoroughly understand and have a command of modes of interpretation, interpreter protocol, and ethics, as well as the procedures and processes within their assigned division in order to effectively provide interpreting services. A court interpreter maintains excellent customer service skills and remains objective in dealing with the irate, emotional, and sometimes difficult general public. Compensation for this service should reflect the critical role a court interpreter plays in the administration of justice in the State of Hawaii.

I support SB2181. It is important to increase the fees for court interpreters to ensure that litigants who are limited English proficient are provided with competent interpreters.

SB-2181

Submitted on: 1/23/2024 2:43:23 PM

Testimony for JDC on 1/25/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Valerie Rose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2181

RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair

Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: January 25, 2024

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

I am writing in support of SB2181, which requires the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court interpreters.

SB218 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.

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 SB2181, the State of Hawaii is taking a step towards ensuring that justice is served to all.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

Valerie Rose

SB-2181

Submitted on: 1/23/2024 8:16:07 PM

Testimony for JDC on 1/25/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexander Bistrika	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Deciding Committee,

I write in support of increasing pay rate and mileage compensation for court interpretation services. I've been a registered court interpreter for a little more than a year now and have been able to asses current compensation first hand. Although my situation may differ from other registered interpreters, I hope my testimony provides a little perspective in general on behalf of all interpreters with a long commute. I am currently driving anywhere from 3 to 6 hours to each appointment (round trip). For a two hour appointment I am paid ca., \$125. Even though that is roughly a full work day, the compensation does not equate to a living wage. In fact, if I worked full-time interpreting then I would make roughly \$3,000/mo. My math: 20 days/mo @ \$150/day. I believe the primary issue is mileage, but even the hourly rate currently paid does not reflect pay for professional services.

Why do I interpret then? I do this for two reasons. First and foremost, I enjoy helping people understand and communicate correctly. As an educator I enjoyed helping students understand, as a mentor I enjoyed helping aspiring professionals understand, and as a father I work hard everyday so my children understand. Second, but not less important, is language upkeep. The only way I feel I can pass on my native language to my children is if I know it well enough to communicate with them in that language about all aspects of life (on a day-to-day basis). I consider this professional development and a continued investment in myself. That's what makes it worth my while at the end of the day.

In conclusion, I hope that the deciding committee found this testimony enlightening, and can agree with me that not everyone can afford to be a court interpreter at the current compensation rate. More importantly, not just anyone can interpret, and the compensation should reflect that more than it currently does.

Many thanks for your time and consideration, sincerely yours,

Dr. Alexander Bistrika

To the Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee:

I am testifying in favor of SB 2181, Relating to Court Interpreters. My name is Victor Saymo, a court interpreter. The proposed increased compensation for court interpreters would not result in a gain for us; it is just an overdue recognition that the pay rate needs to keep up with inflation.

To cite just one example: The Internal Revenue Service mileage reimbursement rate for 2024 is currently 67 cents per mile, 12 cents higher than the 55-cent mileage rate paid to court interpreters. When court interpreters travel on assignment, we are already losing money with each mile, compared to those who travel on work assignment for private business or government agencies. When we travel to a distant court, such as on the other side of the Big Island, we could drive five hours and almost 200 miles round trip. In such a scenario, our loss in terms of mileage reimbursement is \$24, almost equal to one hour's compensation. Factor in the cost of gasoline at between \$4 and \$5 per gallon, and the severe impact on our compensation is evident.

Now is the time to increase our compensation, by approving the bill as a remedy to this inequitable situation, which has lasted for seventeen years. I respectfully ask the Honorable Committee to approve this bill, effective in 2024.

Victor Saymo

SB-2181

Submitted on: 1/23/2024 10:32:14 PM

Testimony for JDC on 1/25/2024 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

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

As a public health professional and concerned citizen, I write in **STRONG SUPPORT** of SB2181, which requires the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court interpreters.

SB218 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.

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 SB2181, the State of Hawaii is taking a step towards ensuring that justice is served to all.

With gratitude,

Thaddeus Pham (he/him)

SB-2181

Submitted on: 1/23/2024 10:58:55 PM

Testimony for JDC on 1/25/2024 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 members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

I strongly SUPPORT SB2181 that would more equitably compensate court interpreters for the valuable language access services they provide for those who need them in our state.

Mahalo for your consideration.

SB-2181

Submitted on: 1/24/2024 9:21:42 AM

Testimony for JDC on 1/25/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Limei Chen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
SB2181

My name is Limei Chen, and I am a registered court interpreter on Big Island. I am testifying in favor of S.B. 2181 in increasing court interpreters' hourly rate and commuters compensation.

As court interpreters, we are considered independent contractors and are relying on the very pay of our jobs since benefits such as health insurance are not provided. Increasing court interpreters' hourly wage and commuters compensation will not only support current court interpreters financially, but also attract more people with the talent into the field and become a part of our honorable profession.

Living on the Big Island, we have very few court interpreters available, and often times court interpreters have to commute between Hilo and Kona courts to meet the courts' needs. Interpreters can easily let retreat by the two-hour drive on the road. Therefore, better compensating the time and effort that court interpreters have to invest will help maximize courts' needs as well as retain our current court interpreters.

Overall, I strongly support bill S.B. 2181.

Thank you for reading my testimony and I hope my testimony be considered to help the bill move forward.

Sincerely,
Limei Chen

SB-2181

Submitted on: 1/24/2024 9:27:44 AM

Testimony for JDC on 1/25/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
MARTIN E ADLER	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

DEAR LEGISLATORS

I HAVE BEEN INTERPRETING SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE IN THE 2ND CIRCUIT COURTS ON MAUI FOR MORE THAN 10 YEARS AS A TIER 2 AND TIER 1 INTERPRETER RESPECTIVELY.

THE CURRENT PAY RATE FOR A TIER 2 INTERPRETER IN THESE LANGUAGES IS \$35/HOUR WITH A TWO HOUR MINIMUM.

I BRING MORE THAN 50 YEARS OF WORK IN THESE LANGUAGES, FIRST AS PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER, LATER AS A US DIPLOMAT, AND LASTLY AS A SPANISH TEACHER. IN ADDITION, I HAVE AN MA DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION FROM THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN WASHINGTON, DC.

WHILE I ENJOY HELPING NON FLUENT SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH TO PRESENT THEMSELVES IN COURT, I BELIEVE THAT THE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE I BRING TO THIS TASK ARE BEING UNDERVALUED.

WHEN I PERFORM SIMILAR INTERPRETATION FOR LAWYERS AND OTHER PRIVATE SECTION ORGANIZATIONS OUTSIDE OF THE COURTROOM, I RECEIVE \$45-75/PER HOUR.

,

IN TODAY'S LABOR MARKET, I BELIEVE THAT AN ENTRY LEVEL PAY RATE OF AT LEAST \$50/HOUR WILL BE NECESSARY TO ATTRACT ENOUGH INTERPRETERS WITH THE REQUISITE SKILL LEVEL TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE ASSISTANCE TO BOTH THE JUDICIARY STAFF AND THE PEOPLE SEEKING JUSTICE IN THE COURTS. OF HAWAII.

RESPECTFULLY YOURS,

MARTIN E. ADLER

PUKALANI, HAWAII

JANUARY 23, 2024

SB-2181

Submitted on: 1/24/2024 10:52:45 AM

Testimony for JDC on 1/25/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christopher A Dimmick	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding SB 2181 (Relating to Court Interpreters). Several years have passed since court interpreters have received a rate increase. The cost of living has increased but court interpreter pay has not kept up. Payscale.com indicates that the cost of living in Honolulu is 88% higher than the national average with housing at 202% higher than the national average.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and Hawai'i HRS 321C require meaningful language access to those served by the Judiciary, or any state agency for that matter.

Due to the antiquated pay rates, many qualified court interpreters turn down court interpretation assignments or place them as the lowest priority because they are able to make more interpreting for other clients who offer higher rates.

This situation really puts court staff between a rock and a hard place given the fact that the law requires them to provide a qualified court interpreter but many qualified court interpreters do not accept court assignments due to the current rates set by the State for court interpreters.

This is a real issue given the sheer number of court cases for which court interpreters are requested. This is no surprise, as one in four Hawai'ians speak a language other than English at home.

I would encourage you to close this pay gap in order for justice to be served for the citizens of our State.

SB-2181

Submitted on: 1/24/2024 2:34:23 PM

Testimony for JDC on 1/25/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rebeca Buel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this measure to provide effective and efficient Language Access to the community.

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, January 25, 2024

Support for S.B. No. 2181, 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. 2181, 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, I reiterate my strong support for this bill.

SB-2181

Submitted on: 1/24/2024 9:36:56 PM

Testimony for JDC on 1/25/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ronald Fujiyoshi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ronald Fujiyoshi. I am a retired missionary and pastor living in Hilo. I am the assistant treasurer of a non-profit organization One Stop Center for Micronesians on Hawaii Island. I want to go on record as strongly supporting SB2181. Interpreters traveling from Hilo to the courthouse in Kona incur high car expenses as well as other personal inconveniences. I think it is only fair to compensate these interpreters adequately to encourage more interpreters to train to become professional interpreters.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Mahalo, Thank you, Kommol tata, Kinisou, Kulo,

Ronald Fujiyoshi, 1156 W. Kawaihewa St., Hilo, Hawai'i.

Marcella Alohalani Boido, M. A.
Hawai'i State Judiciary Certified Spanish Court Interpreter (Tier 4)
Moili'ili, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96826

To: Sen. Karl Rhoads, Chair; Sen. Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Members, Senate Committee on Judiciary
Re: **SB 2181, SUPPORT with comments**
Hearing: Thursday, January 25, 2024, 10 a.m., Room 016

Thank you for hearing this bill. And a big “Thank you” to the Filipino Caucus for bringing it! As SB 2181 points out, hourly fees for interpreters have remained static since at least 2007.¹ 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. They are fishing without any bait.

Chuukese and Marshallese are the 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 on the [Registry](#) has decreased in the last few years.

To work competently as a court interpreter generally requires a level of language knowledge in two languages that is the equivalent of at least two years of college. Better yet, a bachelor's degree. Micronesian bilinguals with this level of education may be snapped up by government offices and non-profits.

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.)² Chuukese and Marshallese “Transitional” bilinguals earn the same as those in Tier 1, and often work about the same number of hours.³

Lacking enough interpreters in Micronesian languages, the Judiciary “fills in” with bilinguals working for Dr. Suzanne Richardson Zeng, owner of Language Services Hawaii. I hear she pays \$40/hour. Of course, Dr. Zeng charges more for their services. These bilinguals have no financial incentive to enter the Judiciary's program. Some people who were on the Registry have withdrawn their names. Others turn down assignments from the Judiciary because they know the work will flow to them at a higher rate of pay through Language Services Hawaii. This results in the Judiciary paying more money for these Tier 1 and Transitional bilinguals.

Some people who work for Language Services Hawaii may be less qualified than the Transitional and Tier 1 groups. They have not gone through the Judiciary's program. They have not taken and passed the Written English and Ethics exams. The Judiciary does not know their

¹ It has been longer than that, but would require a complicated discussion to explain.

² The Written English exam is not an interpreter credential. It is a means to identify those people whose knowledge of English is sufficient to make it possible for them to pass an oral certification test.

³ I do not know of a single Micronesian in the Transitional tier who has later tested into Tier 1.

objective, test-based qualifications. This has serious implications for the administration of justice. The Judiciary is failing to attract more qualified people into the certification program.⁴

In 1990, I was one of the founding members of the Hawaii Interpreters & Translators Association (HITA), the first professional interpreter association in Hawaii. My colleagues elected me chair of the Committee on Fees. I did a considerable amount of research.

In 1995, when the Hawaii Supreme Court Committee on Certification of Court Interpreters was formed, I was part of the Subcommittee on Fees. I explained to the Subcommittee how fees are derived, and then computed a proposed increase. Judge Soong, the Committee's chair, took the proposed fee increases to the administration four times. He was not heeded.

In 2003, the [American Translators Association](#) (ATA) reprinted an article from the [National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators](#) (NAJIT) publication, *Proteus*, that Patricia J. Harpstrite and I co-authored. Quoting from an interpreter petition for a pay raise: "In 1995 the Subcommittee on Fees of the Hawaii Supreme Court Committee on Certification of Court Interpreters suggested a higher pay scale.but no action was taken." "The Judiciary has not raised the minimum court interpreter pay for two decades." And "...the Judiciary cannot compete effectively for the services of competent court interpreters needed to provide equal access and linguistic due process for Hawaii's Limited English Proficient population."⁵

In NAJIT, I served on both the Committee on Shared Concerns with the Bench and Bar⁶ and the Committee on [Advocacy](#).

On page 4 of their testimony on March 15th, 2023, on SB 813, the Supreme Court Committee on Court Interpreters and Language Access, Subcommittee on Interpreter Fees, calculated higher, more appropriate fee increases that better account for inflation and Hawaii's high cost of living. This bill should either be amended to reflect their figures, or be considered as creating a floor, not a ceiling, for fees. This year the Judiciary's supplemental budget *should* reflect their findings and increase fees appropriately.

In 2013, ATA asked me to serve as one of three people responding to an article about interpreter shortages. I wrote: "Jobs are unstable and wages are often too low." And added: "...employers need to change from a win-lose financial model to playing a win-win game."⁷

Eleven years later, this bill is a step in that direction. SB 2181 focuses attention on the longstanding problem of extremely inadequate fees for court interpreters. Fairness should begin at home, within the Judiciary, by treating and paying bilinguals and court interpreters fairly.

Passing this bill is an essential part of providing and hopefully, improving, language access through enabling the Judiciary to recruit and retain competent and ethical court interpreters.

Please pass SB 2181 with an appropriation of at least \$530,000.00. That is the figure in the Judiciary's supplemental budget. Effective date: July 1, 2024.

Thank you.

⁴ "[In Many Courtrooms, Bad Interpreters Can Mean Justice Denied](#)," by Rebecca Beitsch, August 17, 2016.

⁵ "[Court Interpreting](#)," *Newsletter of the Interpreters Division of ATA*, Summer 2003, p. 6.

⁶ <https://studylib.net/doc/9444494/bench-and-bar-presentation-2012>

⁷ "[Interpreter Shortages](#)," by Corinne McKay. *The ATA Chronicle*, April 2013, p. 31.

My name is Carmina Alik and I've been a Marshallese interpreter with the Hawaii Judiciary for over 15 years. In those 15+ years, my pay rate increased by \$10 because I passed the certification exam. I also interpret in the State of Washington, Oregon, and California, and in those states, I notice firsthand that there is so much advancement and support for interpreters and translators, especially with the languages that are difficult to find interpreters for. The rate of pay for interpreters in the Pacific Northwest have been raised at least twice since I started with them. And when called last minute for in person or zoom, I have gotten paid \$250-\$500 for half a day assignments since my language is not easy to find an interpreter for.

I love living in Hawaii but I don't believe I would have been able to support my family without the help of my husband who is a doctor so he is able to provide what I cannot for our family. With the high cost of living in Hawaii, the rate of pay we get now is just not enough. So, to attract qualified interpreter candidates who would have to make enough to pay their high rent, utility bills, feed their children, needless to say pay the high medical bills that come by every so often, we must act now to improve conditions for our interpreters. We must support the important work they do as language and communication is vital for our courts to succeed. Increasing the mileage rate of reimbursement and commuter travel compensation must also increase to accommodate for the increase in gas prices, wear and tear on personal vehicles and childcare costs while away from home and children.

I fully support SB2181 so that we can come closer to having our younger generation of interpreters can anticipate a secure work pay with pride as they would be better equipped to provide for their families, their children and grand

children with their most basic of needs and then some. Thank you for this opportunity to share my insight. Mahalo and kōmōlōkō