

The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i

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

House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
Representative Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair

Wednesday, March 15, 2023, 2:15 p.m.
Conference Room 325 & Via Videoconference

by:

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

Bill No. and Title: Senate Bill No. 813, S.D.1, 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, S.D. 1, 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.

The Judiciary estimates the fiscal impact of the proposed increase in interpreter fee rates would be about \$300,000 in FY 2024.

FISCAL IMPACT OF INTERPRETER FEE INCREASES (Based on FY22 Court Interpreter Payments)						
TIER	FEES	% OF TOTAL EXPENDITURES	CURRENT HOURLY FEE	PROPOSED NEW HOURLY FEE	% CHANGE IN HOURLY FEE	FISCAL IMPACT OF FEE INCREASE
TIER 6	\$12,403.20	2.28%	\$55.00	\$90.00	63.64%	\$7,893.40
TIER 4	\$54,617.60	10.04%	\$45.00	\$70.00	55.56%	\$30,345.54
TIER 3	\$38,025.60	6.99%	\$40.00	\$60.00	50.00%	\$19,012.80
TIER 2	\$110,268.80	20.27%	\$35.00	\$50.00	42.86%	\$47,261.21
TIER 1	\$135,836.80	24.97%	\$25.00	\$40.00	60.00%	\$81,502.08
OTHER*	\$108,636.80	19.97%	\$25.00	\$40.00	60.00%	\$65,182.08
TOTAL	\$544,000.00	84.52%				\$251,197.10

NOTE: A portion of the total expenditures for interpreter services would not be impacted by the proposed fee increase and are therefore not included in the fiscal impact calculation.

*OTHER includes expenditures for interpreter services made to interpreters not covered by the Judiciary's court interpreter fee rate schedule.

Although the projected fiscal impact total \$251,198, the Judiciary's projection was based on FY 2022 expenditures. The Judiciary is cognizant that FY 2022 expenditures reflect lower usage of court interpreters due to continuing COVID-19 impacts on court operations. With the full reopening of the courts and continuous movement towards a less restrictive environment, the Judiciary anticipates that interpreter usage will increase during FY 2023 and FY 2024.

Thus, the Judiciary is requesting an appropriation of \$300,000 for FY 2024 to provide interpreter fee increases without reducing other critical programs and services. 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.

We respectfully suggest the following amendments to the measure:

- 1) SECTION 2(1). An annual increase of interpreter hourly fees to reflect the State's consumer price index would be fiscally challenging without a corresponding annual increase in appropriations. If the Judiciary is not appropriated funding for an annual increase, the Judiciary cannot implement one. Accordingly, we propose that a study of

interpreter fees, including the impact of changes to the State's consumer price index and recommendations on adjustments to the fee rates, be conducted every three years and submitted to the Chief Justice for consideration.

- 2) SECTION 2(2). Amending the language of this paragraph to clarify that the mileage reimbursement rate would be adjusted based on the Internal Revenue Service standard mileage rate on January 1 of each year.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this measure.

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

Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair
Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair

Rep. Sonny Ganaden	Rep. Greggor Ilagan
Rep. Daniel Holt	Rep. Sam Satoru Kong
Rep. Troy N. Hashimoto	Rep. John M. Mizuno
Rep. Linda Ichiyama	Rep. Kanani Souza

Date: Wednesday, March 15, 2023
Time: 2:15 PM
Place: State Capitol, Convergence Room 325
Via Videoconference

by:

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

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 has been meeting in 2022 and 2023 for the purpose of addressing this very important issue. Our own research and statistics gathered from other states and the federal system clearly show that a significant pay increase for court interpreters is warranted. Therefore, this Subcommittee 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 Hawai'i, 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.

Unfortunately, the current pay scale for court interpreters of all tiers does not reflect these important contributions and specialized skills, as 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 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 workers.

To illustrate this point, we have included some relevant calculations below.

According to the national CPI inflation calculator from BLS.gov, 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.

https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

State of HI Court Interpreter Tier	Jan 2007 Interpreter Pay Rate	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	\$25	\$16.91

This translates into a 32.5% real dollar for dollar pay decrease since 2007 for court interpreters in Hawai'i. Put in 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.

A person making \$55/hour in 2007 would have to make \$81.29/hour in 2023 to have similar purchasing power as in 2007. (\$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.

State of HI Court Interpreter Tier	Jan 2007 hourly court interpreter rate	Jan 2023 value with national inflation calculation	Jan 2023 value with inflation and federal cost of living adjustment of 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

Given these real numbers, we find that Senate Bill No. 813, Relating to Court Interpreters' fee schedule proposal below reasonably reflects the actual inflation rates since 2007, takes into consideration the fact that, as independent contractors, interpreters do not receive benefits such as medical insurance, paid vacation, sick days or employer-sponsored retirement plans, and allows for at least partial compensation for the added cost of living in Hawai'i, as calculated by the federal government.

	Current Interpreter Pay Rate	Bill 813 Interpreter Rate Proposal
Tier 6	\$55/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$90/hr., 2 hr. min.
Tier 5	\$50/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$80/hr., 2 hr. min.
Tier 4	\$45/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$70/hr., 2 hr. min.
Tier 3	\$40/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$60/hr., 2 hr. min.
Tier 2	\$35/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$50/hr., 2 hr. min.
Tier 1	\$25/hr., 2 hr. min.	\$40/hr., 2 hr. min.

Rates similar to those in the table above are already being paid to court interpreters in locations such as Austin, TX (\$100/hr., 2 hr. min. for certified interpreters) and Phoenix, AZ (\$95/hr., 2 hr. min. for certified interpreters), where the cost of living is significantly lower than in Hawai'i. In fact, according to the Forbes Cost of Living Comparison Salary Calculator, a person earning \$100/hr. in Austin would have to earn \$192/hr. in Hawai'i to maintain the same purchasing power and standard of living. Similarly, a \$95/hr. wage in Phoenix translates into \$176/hr. in Hawai'i.

2023 INTERPRETER ACTUAL TOP PAY BY LOCATION; EQUIVALENT PAY IN HI WITH COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACCORDING TO FORBES/CNN MONEY COST OF LIVING COMPARISON SALARY CALCULATOR

LOCATION #1	TOP NON-ALS INTERPRETER PAY	HONOLULU EQUIVALENT PAY ADJUSTED FOR COLA – FORBES, CNN MONEY
AZ (Phoenix)	\$95/hr.	\$176/hr
FL (Naples)	\$120/hr. (non-Spanish)	\$221/hr.
TX (Travis County- Austin)	\$100/hr.	\$192/hr

It stands to reason that 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.

This has the effect of undermining Judiciary Policy #12 of providing meaningful access to court processes and services to persons with limited English proficiency.

Another issue that must be addressed is court interpreter travel compensation and reimbursement. Currently, interpreters are receiving a 55 cent per mile reimbursement for travel expenses, even though the Internal Revenue Service's current standard mileage rate is 65.5 cents per gallon. Interpreters are sometimes required to travel long distances to cover certain assignments. The current reimbursement of 55 cents per mile is outdated, insufficient, and discourages interpreters from accepting long-distance assignments, as they must make up the difference out of pocket. With regard to compensation for commuter time, this Subcommittee agrees that an interpreter traveling 150 miles or more roundtrip for an assignment should be paid for three hours of commuter time. Not only does this payment reflect the actual commuter time more accurately, but it will likely encourage more interpreters to accept these long-distance assignments.

It is important to call attention to the fact that all court interpreters in Hawai'i are independent contractors who are hired on a need-only basis, making them extremely cost-effective for the state. In 2019, there were a total of 10,595 interpreted court proceedings. Interpreter expenditures for that year were just \$863,815.

The Subcommittee Regarding Interpreter Fees of the Supreme Court Committee on Court Interpreters and Language Access has been addressing the above issues and will be presenting its report to the Supreme Court shortly.

In order to avoid another sixteen-year fee stagnation for court interpreters, this Subcommittee further proposes a periodic review of interpreter fees to be conducted no more than every three years. The Subcommittee also agrees with a yearly review of the mileage allowance to match the annual standard mileage rate issued by the Internal Revenue Service. The Supreme Court Committee on Court Interpreters and Language Access, a standing advisory committee of Judiciary and community stakeholders appointed by the Hawai'i Supreme Court, would be willing to coordinate, and/or participate in, such periodic review.

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 matter.



**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 SD 1
RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS**

REPRESENTATIVE DAVID A. TARNAS, CHAIR
REPRESENTATIVE GREGG TAKAYAMA, VICE CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

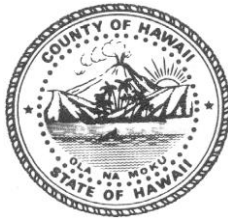
Hearing Date: 3/15/2023

Room Number: 325 & Videoconference

- 1 **Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of this measure is to require the judiciary to increase
- 2 the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court
- 3 interpreters to reflect the significant increase in the cost of living in Hawaii. Appropriates funds.
- 4 **Agency's Position:** The Office of Language Access (OLA) supports this measure and defers to
- 5 the judiciary for any substantive recommendations.
- 6 Qualified interpreters provide a critical link in clear and effective communication. Specially
- 7 trained interpreters ensure that individuals with Limited English proficiency (LEP) have
- 8 meaningful access to the information they need to make decisions that can impact their lives and
- 9 livelihood in matters related to the legal system, as well as health, welfare, education, housing,
- 10 and other matters. The ability to retain a pool of qualified interpreters is integral for LEP
- 11 individuals to successfully access the important programs, services, and activities of all
- 12 government agencies.
- 13 Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 813 SD1.

KELDEN B.A. WALTJEN
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

STEPHEN L. FRYE
FIRST DEPUTY
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY



655 KILAUEA AVENUE
HILO, HAWAII 96720
PH: (808) 961-0466
FAX: (808) 961-8908

74-675 KEALAKEHE PARKWAY
KAILUA-KONA, HAWAII 96740
PH: (808) 322-2552
FAX: (808) 322-6584

64-1067 MAMALAHOA HIGHWAY, C-3
KAMUELA, HAWAII 96743
PH: (808) 887-3017
FAX: (808) 887-3016

OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF
SENATE BILL NO. 813, SD1**

A BILL FOR AN ACT
RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Representative David Tarnas, Chair
Representative Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair

Wednesday, March 15, 2023 at 2:15 p.m.
Via Videoconference
State Capitol Conference Room 325
415 South Beretania Street

Honorable Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Takayama, 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, SD1.

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, SD1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



March 13, 2023

The Legal Clinic

Testimony in Support of SB813_SD1 - Relating to Court Interpreters

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair and Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 15, 2023; 2:15 p.m.

Conference Room 325 & via videoconference

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

The Legal Clinic (“TLC”) submits testimony in **SUPPORT of SB813_SD1**, which requires the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court interpreters. SB813_SD1 is a crucial bill 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_SD1

Mahalo nui for your time and consideration,

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



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

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB813 SD1
RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS**

Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair
Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 15, 2023

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR) is in full **support of SB813 SD1**, 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catherine Chen', is written over a horizontal line.

Catherine Chen
Co-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/>

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2023 6:39:14 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
M. Cristina Arsuaga	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Testimony to the

House of Representatives

Thirty-Second State Legislature

2023 Regular Session

Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair

Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair

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Rep. Daniel Holt Rep. Sam Satoru Kong

Rep. Troy N. Hashimoto Rep. John M. Mizuno

Rep. Linda Ichiyama Rep. Kanani Souza

Date: Wednesday, March 15, 2023

Time: 2:15 PM

Place: State Capitol, Convergence Room 325

Via Videoconference

by:

WRITTEN AND IN-PERSON TESTIMONY

M. Cristina Arsuaga

Federally Certified and State of HI Tier 6 Master Spanish Court Interpreter

Contact number: 917 387 4617

Carsuaga1@icloud.com

In re: 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 Hawai‘i, 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 Hawai‘i are earning significantly less than they did in 2007 for their work with the courts in a state with the highest cost of living in the nation.

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 better remunerated and more secure 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 personal support for this bill.

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 813, SD1
RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**

Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair

Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 15, 2023, 2:15PM

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing **in support of SB 813, SD1**, 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. I am a Tier 3 court interpreter and therefore get higher pay than many of my colleagues who do not have a test in their languages in order to move up the tier system. I personally know excellent community and Medical interpreters who speak Samoan, Chuukese, Pohnpeian and Marshallese 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. SB 813, SD1 is important in that not only will court interpreters get what they deserve, but the higher pay will attract higher quality interpreters. Court interpreter compensation has remained the same over the past 16 years. It is time for an increase.

This bill will benefit our limited and non-English speaking defendants and victim witnesses in that they will receive justice and equality in the courts. The role court interpreters play in seeking “justice for all” cannot be overstated.

Thank you for your support in passing SB 813, SD1,


Suzanne M Zeng

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/13/2023 7:10:02 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lolita Quibol	Independent Tagalog Interpreter	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

First, Thank you for finally looking into the pay of interpreters in Hawaii. I think its long long over due.

I definitely Support this Bill.

I have been a Registered Tagalog Interpreter in the island of Oahu for 14 years now and we haven't had any increase at all. The current rate of the interpreters in Hawaii is way below the rate in mainland. As well as, with current cost of living and the inflation rate in Hawaii the rate that they are giving us doesn't commensurate to the work we do. We are definitely under pay.

Also, the mileage should be automatically be the same with mileage charge IRS is implementing every year. I think this is fair.

Finally, The interpreters rate should be automatically reviewed on a regular basis to compete with the current rate in mainland and cost of living in Hawaii.

This way, you can retain and recruit more interpreters. Because interpreters play a major role in the fast implementation of justice here in Hawaii.

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2023 10:14:17 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jungshin Oberlin	Independent Contractor	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

March 14, 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

I would like to endorse the proposed legislation — SB 813, SD1.

I have been a qualified State of Hawaii Court Interpreter for five years. It has been my honor to support the Court system and the men and women who work hard to insure justice is available for all. However, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the cost of living and the current inflationary pressures are making it more difficult for independent contractors to work in Hawaii given current pay schedules. Our interpreter work often requires long commutes and intervening down times in random locations. These conditions can be financially constraining, especially in today's economy. An adjustment as proposed to the current pay schedules would be most helpful in maintaining and attracting the best qualified Hawaii Court interpreters. I thoroughly enjoy my work as a Hawaii Court Interpreter and wish to continue providing assistance to those in need.

Sincerely,

Jungshin Oberlin

State of Hawaii Court Interpreter

Chair, Vice Chair and members of the Committee:

I would like to testify in favor of SB 813, Relating to Court Interpreters. My name is Victor Saymo, a court interpreter. The Internal Revenue Service mileage reimbursement rate for 2023 is currently 65.5 cents per mile, 10.5 cents higher than the mileage rate paid to court interpreters. SB 813 is an overdue remedy to this inequitable situation.

I respectfully implore the Honorable members of the Committee to support this bill.

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

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/13/2023 7:10:32 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hayato Honjo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this testimony as the cost to interpret has increased for us interpreters with inflation and etc. It would help us personally if this bill gets passed. Thank you in advance.

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/13/2023 7:48:55 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nataliya Peck	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please consider increasing interpreters fees and travel expenses reimbursements. Interpreters are self-employed contractors that incur business expenses in order to do their job. Prices have gone up on everything that we use for business: gas, public transportation, printer paper and ink, internet access, and other things, and the list goes on. Yet, our reimbursement remain the same, making it effectively less profitable for us to provide these services. Nobody likes a paycut.

I might be more available for enterpreting assignments if I am being compensated properly.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nataliya Peck

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/13/2023 8:13:14 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support to increase interpreter fee hourly rates, mileage reimbursement rates and commuter-time compensation rate.

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/13/2023 8:34:05 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Pase	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Mary Pase. I am a court interpreter and I am testifying in support of SB 813 SD1. As the cost of living, especially gas prices escalate, the interpreter's fees remain the same regardless of the distance we travel to fulfill our assignments. I am in total support of the rates increase as outlined in the Bill.

Thank you,

Mary Pase, Samoan Interpreter

My name is Gunda Nollenberger, and I am writing today as a concerned fellow interpreter to testify in support of S.B. 813 `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 interpretation 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.

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB813
RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
Representative Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair**

Hearing Date: March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of SB813, which requires the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court interpreters (SD1).

SB813 is crucial legislation. Hawai'i's award-winning court interpreter program took years to build, and only continues to be staffed through the tireless efforts of state employees who are passionate about justice, and who are committed to keeping the rolls of the court interpreter list filled. These independent contractors who serve as court interpreters will achieve neither fame nor fortune for their work. They won't earn extra perks or vacation days for their longevity in the program. Like so many other essential workers whose everyday jobs are laden with the stress of helping others in dire straits, they are prone to burn out.

Perhaps most notable of all, these highly skilled linguists are rarely recognized for the invaluable work they do: ensuring that legal proceedings in our state courts can move forward in a just and equitable manner. One need only recall the photos of Brittney Griner during her imprisonment in Russia on charges of drug possession and trafficking to appreciate just how desperate and hopeless an individual feels when endeavoring to navigate a legal system where s/he does not speak the language. It is only by virtue of the efforts of the rare *highly proficient* bilingual who has undertaken to develop the *specialized skills* required for court interpreting AND who has made the commitment to undertake this *poorly-remunerated work*, that individuals with limited English proficiency involved in our court system can hope to experience some level of understanding that their case is being adjudicated fairly.

Data from the State of Florida, available on the website of the National Center for State Courts (<https://www.ncsc.org/consulting-and-research/areas-of-expertise/interpreter-info/resources-for-program-managers/lap-map/florida>) demonstrates the abysmally low wages for contracted court interpreters in Hawai'i:

“Contract court interpreters [in Florida] shall be paid rates not to exceed those delineated below. Rates exceeding the maximum may be paid in extenuating circumstances as approved by the Chief Judge of the circuit.

Certified Spoken Language Interpreters (per the Florida Rules for Certification and Regulation of Court Interpreters):

- Spanish \$60 per hour (2 hour minimum with ¼ hour increments thereafter)
- Haitian Creole \$90 per hour (2 hour minimum with ¼ hour increments thereafter)
- Other Spoken Languages \$120 per hour (2 hour minimum with ¼ hour increments thereafter)
- Written Translations \$60 per page (8.5” by 11” page)

Non-Certified Interpreters

- Spanish \$45 per hour (2 hour minimum with ¼ hour increments thereafter)
- Haitian Creole \$75 per hour (2 hour minimum with ¼ hour increments thereafter)
- Other Spoken Languages \$90 per hour (2 hour minimum with ¼ hour increments thereafter)
- Written Translations \$35 per page (8.5” by 11” page)

Wages for Hawai‘i court interpreters range from \$25-\$40 for uncertified interpreters, and from \$45-\$55 for certified interpreters. In sum, *our highest tier certified interpreter* (including those who have passed the Federal Court Interpreting Certification Examination) *barely surpasses* the pay rate of a *non-certified interpreter* for Spanish (more commonly spoken on the mainland than any single language spoken in Hawai‘i) in Florida. Frankly stated: This is unacceptable.

Please act to protect our justice system, the individuals with limited English proficiency who are engaged in it, and the uncommon individuals who serve it. No translation tool or artificial intelligence program can replace a court interpreter. If we lose the good will and engagement of our skilled and highly proficient bilingual citizens, who will we turn to to ensure that justice is served?

I urge you to pass SB813. A failure of justice that results from our failure to support those who can provide language access is an assault on the proud multilingual heritage of our residents and an insult to the Hawaiian roots that anchor the Legislature’s own Aloha Spirit Law.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

Dina R. Yoshimi
Aiea

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

SB 813 SD1, Support, with two amendments

House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs: Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair; Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair; Members of the Committee
Hearing: March 15, 2023, 2:15 p.m., Room 325

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, 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 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.

The Judiciary has a problem with language access. It cannot adequately staff all the hearings where a bilingual is needed.

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 currently 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 at least \$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 will enable the Judiciary to better staff our courts, and to recruit to fill Hawaii's needs. Our Limited-English Proficient population will be better served. It will improve retention, it is fair, and also long, long, long overdue.

Please pass this bill with an effective date in 2023. Thank you for your kokua.

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2023 7:38:49 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

To Whom It May Concern:

With prices increasing everywhere and for everything due to inflation. It only seems reasonable that pay increase as well. Interpretation is a much needed professional service that is required as part of a diverse and growing society of multi-lingual community members. As such the professionals whom provide this service-- bridging the gaps in language barriers-- deserve pay that is both commensurate and representative of the value provided within their respective communities. I believe the increases proposed as part of SB813 are appropriate.

Yours Truly,

Dr. Alexander Bistrika

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2023 8:28:41 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Hello,

Thank you for considering this bill.

Since I started interpreting for the court system in 2009, it has been extremely hard to keep that as sole income.

Many residents count on interpreters to be able to understand an already complicated legal system, in many cases the process to secure interpreters fails because it's not worth the interpreters time to drive for the hourly wage and additionally to obtain professional certifications is expensive.

Please consider a pay raise according to the very expensive state we live on and added inflation for gas mileage.

Thank you,

Rebeca B

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2023 9:18:35 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jocelyn Grace Dei Manipol- Larson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! I am Jocelyn Grace Manipol-Larson I am an interpreter of Ilongo & Visayan dialects and Tagalog language. I live in Hilo, Hawaii for almost fifteen (15) years.

I began interpreting in May 2009, six (6) months after I arrived in Hawaii straight from the Philippines.

This is the first job that I held in Hawaii. Though, I love court interpreting, I cannot really afford to focus on being “only an interpreter” to support and help my family’s needs in the Philippines.

Court Interpreters in Hawaii are not regular employees. Court Interpreters are “on call” workers, (independent contractors) and don’t have medical insurance benefits. Hence, we have to look for other means of employment like translation or seeking employed somewhere else to be financially stable.

In this regard, I am in support of the approval of the proposal to increase the Interpreter’s payment, reimbursement and mileage fee.

Every time I am called to interpret in the Kona Courthouse, I have to drive two (2) hours one way just to get there. Though, I’m paid with my mileage, 50 cents per mile, it doesn’t really make sense with all the increase in gas prices.

The job of an interpreter doesn’t stop when the Instructor of the Driver’s Bureau stopped lecturing; we continue when the video clip will be played. If there are three to five (3-5) people simultaneously speaking in the videotape, I will also interpret what they are saying so my client can understand what they’re talking about.

For two (2) days, seven to eight (7-8) hours per day, an interpreter is interpreting non-stop when the Instructor, the characters in the video and plus the book activities will be interpreted to the LEP.

This also happen in the court room during arraignment hearing, trial and even before the LEP will be called to the judge’s sala. Oftentimes, when Public Defender’s attorney wants to interview and talk to the client, our job starts already even before the case is called. They will

be interviewed by Public Defender or by their lawyer, hence, an interpreter will be present to interpret even before appearing to the judge's sala.

Whereas, during arraignment or trial, the interpreter's job starts, too, as soon as the court clerk called the case, the bailiff swear an oath to the interpreter, opening statement of the judge, the public defender or (private lawyer) and the prosecutor and whoever will sit in the witness(es) stand.

“For proper administration of justice in Hawaii, this is the right time that an interpreter should be given an increase in mileage fee, reimbursement and hourly rate will be adjusted to cover the basic expenses and necessities”. Therefore, I am supporting SB 813.

Looking forward for a favorable approval in this matter.

Mahalo.

In Service,

Jocelyn Grace Manipol-Larson

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2023 10:57:45 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
María E López- Fisher	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a HI Level IV Court Certified Spanish Interpreter, on the west side of the big island. Since 2000, our hourly pay rate hasn't changed, while the cost of living has skyrocketed. The lack of qualified interpreters on island, is concerning, there is only another level IV interpreter on the east side, we are both on our 70's, and ready to retire. Without an economic incentive for interpreters to study and increase their proficiency, the administration of Justice will suffer. Any objection to the qualifications of interpreters, will result in justice delayed, and cost to import language assistance from other islands. All of us must work at other jobs, in order to afford living in HI, which leaves no time or resources to apply ourselves to increase our abilities. Mahalo.

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2023 12:46:25 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rhonda Akano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Senators,

I have proudly served the Hawaii state as a Japanese court interpreter for almost ten years; since 2014. I have traveled to three different courthouses on Hawaii Island, ranging in travel time from 40 minutes minimum up to two hours each way. When the hourly rate is equally distributed (two hours of court plus travel time), the pay-range can be calculated as approximately between \$12.50 and \$8.33 per hour. Our current state minimum wage is \$12.00 per hour (as of October 1, 2022). That minimum wage is an increase of over 65% since 2007 (\$7.25). It goes without saying that since then, prices of goods and services have also increased significantly. A matching rate increase at minimum for court interpreters will be of tremendous help, as some of us at times struggle to adjust our work schedules so we can continue to contribute to the fundamental rights of all parties to have equal access to justice.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration for this overdue matter.

Rhonda Lehuanani Anakalea Akano

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2023 12:47:29 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama and members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

I am in strong support of SB813 SD1. 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 for your consideration.

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2023 1:40:29 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Adriana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

I give my full support towards the passing of Senate Bill 813. As a gig worker (substitute teacher for public schools, organic farmer, yoga instructor, aerial performer, and court interpreter, I have no full time salary or benefits and rely solely on my own experience and determination to create a successful and sustainable career out of my many skills.

A lot of time is wasted just getting to a job site and back. In addition, my work as a fluent speaker of English and Spanish and my impeccable physical presentation, elocution, and etiquette are worth more than the paltry amount that I receive. Bailiffs, judges, prosecutors, police officers, administrative staff are all better well paid than interpreters but our skills are just as important to a well functioning democratic society.

I reiterate my support for the passing and implementation of Senate Bill 813.

mahalo nui Loa,

Adriana Woods

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2023 3:16:57 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support SB813.

With the high cost of living in Hawaii,the rate increase is long overdue.

We have been underpaid compare to other interpreters working on the mainland.

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2023 3:27:02 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sandra Tsukiyama	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have worked in the court systems in the State of Hawaii as a Spanish and Portuguese language interpreter since the late 1980s. I support this bill as a positive measure to support my colleagues and myself whose work is crucial for the defendants whose lives depend on the accuracy of our ability to communicate between two languages. Many of us continue to further our training in the various techniques related to our work, i.e., simultaneous, and consecutive interpretation, sight translation as well as continuous acquisition of pertinent legal vocabulary, jargon, regional expressions and other language-related challenges in this constantly-changing field of work.

The proposal of the long-awaited increase in the salaries of the various interpreter tiers would truly be a welcome improvement to our ranks, indicating the State government's value of our profession.

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2023 5:13:17 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roman Druker	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In addition to the proposed changes,

please discuss validaing and paying for the parking fees that the interpreters pay when parked at the Judiciary's parking lots.

roman drucker

interpreter

15 March 2023

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2023 10:43:35 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Soyeon Hiremath	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a court interpreters for many years I've been debating to get a different career because the job doesn't pay us enough to keep it as a career. Often times this low paying job bring many attorneys to have experience with low quality ineterpreters. Living expense in Hawaii is much higher than other states it is justifiable to request a raise in interpreter's

p Payment plan. Sincerely, Soyeon Hiremath

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2023 5:32:01 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shaoli Gu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Shaoli Gu. I am writing in support of Senate Bill 813, Senate Draft 1, Relating to Court Interpreters, to increase interpreter fee hourly rates, mileage reimbursement rates and commuter-time compensation rate.

I have been working as a translator/interpreter (full-time employee or freelance at full-time capacity) since 2006. I obtained my certificate of Tier-4 Certified Interpreter in Mandarin interpreter in 2016 and have worked for district and circuit courts on various assignments.

As a certified interpreter, I am paid at an hourly rate of \$45, two hours minimum. This rate is not a fair compensation for certified interpreters who are required to possess specialized knowledge and skills to pass the certification exam. A person who can converse casually in two languages are far from being qualified interpreters. Currently for my language, there are only two certified interpreters in the State of Hawaii.

Out of context, the hourly rate of \$45 seems quite acceptable. However, court interpreters are not guaranteed of regular assignments, which could be few and far between at times; and court interpreters receive no benefits. Sometimes a court assignment may be completed less than two hours – some may argue that court interpreters are paid higher than the published pay rate given that they work less than two hours but get paid for two hours, but a court interpreter who accepts a court assignment and agrees to commit two hours will not be able to schedule other interpreting jobs during those two hours.

Through my interactions with court interpreters in other states (e.g. at the annual conference of American Translators Association), I have learned that the hourly rate of \$45 is among the lowest in the nation for certified court interpreters. The hourly rate \$45 is less than half of the fees I normally charge for other legal and interpretation assignments in Hawaii.

I believe an increase of court interpreters pay will contribute to a pool of more and better qualified language professionals, which will not only benefit the court system, but also the communities in Hawaii at large.

Thank you!

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2023 10:07:20 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Debora Letelier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We provide a quality service that is needed in the state. We constantly educate ourselves and prepare for each assignments. We get paid months after each assignment, and most of us leave our full time jobs for a couple of hours for this. We can decline an assignment and help the person outside the court system, and we would get compensated 3 to 4 times as much, PER PERSON, yet some of us choose to serve the court system. The increase of pay would most likely get you a bigger pool of interpreters. Now paying for our services at least after 30 days of the assignement would help.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 813

I have been a tier 2 Spanish interpreter for the 2nd District Court of Hawaii for 10 years. My prior experience includes 20 years as a US Diplomat, and several years as a TEFL teacher and Spanish teacher. I have an MA Degree in International Communication from American University in Washington, DC.

I live a 12 mile/25 minute drive from the 2nd District Court. When I go to the court for an interpreting assignment, I wait anywhere from 10 to 40 minutes before providing my services and then driving home.

During the pandemic, when I did my court interpretations via zoom, the compensation of \$35/hour for creating a two hour commitment in my schedule and providing interpretation was reasonable.

With the pandemic past, I have become quite reluctant to spend more than 2 hours of my time driving to and from the court, finding parking, going through security, and waiting for my case to be called for \$85 in compensation for my services and mileage travelled.

I strongly support the raise in professional compensation and mileage provisions of SB 813 in the interest of enabling the Hawaii Judiciary System to provide high quality interpretation to the clients and staff of the state courts.

With Aloha,

Martin E. Adler
3/13/2023

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2023 1:20:20 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Xin Liu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Xin Liu, certified Mandarin Interpreter for the State Judiciary for over 20 years. I don't even remember when was the last time we interpreters got a raise. It is high time that this matter is addressed. As a freelance interpreter, I have been also working for other government agencies such as Federal courts and State Department which give interpreters a raise almost on annual basis. With such a high inflation and high cost of living, interpreters need a raise to pay rents ; mortgages; medical expenses and food. I thank you in advance for your consideration. Respectfully submitted, Xin Liu

SB-813-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2023 4:23:13 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/15/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angelina Mercado	Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence	Support	In Person

Comments:

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB813
RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
Representative Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair**

Hearing Date: March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, 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 (SD1).

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 an immigration paralegal, I have seen firsthand the immense importance of court interpreters. My experiences in court have shown me the dire need for court interpreters. Too often, I have seen immigrants who do not speak English being forced to represent themselves in court without a proper understanding of the legal system or the language. Watching these individuals struggle to understand the proceedings and express their thoughts and feelings accurately is heart-wrenching.

It is also important to note that court interpreters require specialized training and certification, and their services should not be undervalued.

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,
Maria Rallojaj