

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 02 2024

RE: S.B. No. 2181
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Second State Legislature
Regular Session of 2024
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Judiciary, to which was referred S.B. No. 2181 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO COURT INTERPRETERS,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to require the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court interpreters to reflect the significant increase in the cost of living in the State.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Judiciary, Office of Language Access, Office of the Prosecuting Attorney of the County of Hawaii, Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights, and twenty-two individuals.

Your Committee finds that the State has one of the largest populations of non-English speakers in the nation, and court interpreters play an integral role in the administration of justice in the State. Court interpreters are critical for a defendant with limited English proficiency to exercise the defendant's constitutional and statutory right to represent themselves in court or assist counsel. However, court interpreters are often required to drive, sometimes for hours, to distant courthouses to provide these critical interpretation services. Additionally, despite the substantial increase in the



cost of living in the State over the years, the compensation for court interpreters has largely remained unchanged since 2007. This measure will address the increased financial burdens many court interpreters face while helping the State to administer justice by requiring the Judiciary to increase the hourly fees, mileage reimbursement rate, and commuter-time compensation rate for court interpreters.

Your Committee notes that the Judiciary has included in its supplemental budget request for fiscal year 2024-2025 a request of \$530,000 for court interpreter services. Your Committee also notes that the hourly amounts currently paid to court interpreters have not been increased in seventeen years, despite the cost of living increasing during the same period. Your Committee believes that the requested amount is unlikely to meet that need.

Your Committee has amended this measure by making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Judiciary that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 2181, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 2181, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Judiciary,



KARL RHOADS, Chair



