



National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators
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September 1, 2024

Latricia Kinlow, Judicial Branch Administrator
King County Municipal Courts
Subject: Feedback on 2025-2026 Interpreter Payment Policy
To: Latricia Kinlow, interpreters@tukwilawa.gov

Dear King County Municipal Courts,

The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) is writing on behalf of its 1,100+ members to comment on proposed changes to the interpreter payment policies in the municipal courts of King County. Our association, founded in 1978, is singular in representing court interpreters, court translators, judicial officers, scholars, and trainers, and interpretation and translation students. We are united by our commitment to advancing the professional contributions of interpreters and translators in legal settings, nurturing their growth, and advocating for best practices that ensure equitable access to justice for people with limited English proficiency (LEP).

We received a copy of the proposed changes to the interpreter payment policies in King County's municipal courts. Upon reviewing them, we first wish to congratulate you on the increase in hourly rates of compensation for contract court interpreters. However, we have serious misgivings about the proposals to (1) reduce the minimum time for remote interpretation and (2) reduce pay for late cancellations by paying interpreters only half of the requested time. Reducing compensation in this manner is out of step with industry standards and other courts in Washington and around the country.

It is our unwavering belief that fair and competitive compensation for court interpreters, reflective of their skills and the demands of their profession, is paramount. This compensation is not just a matter of equity, but a crucial factor in attracting and retaining qualified interpreters. This, in turn, directly influences fair access to justice.

While remote interpretation is no substitute to onsite interpretation, we would acknowledge that it has become an important tool in facilitating the courts' access to credentialed interpreters of languages of lesser diffusion when local professionals are unavailable. It requires the same skill and expertise as interpreting in person, as well as sufficient technical equipment and knowledge to smoothly navigate a variety of virtual platforms. Although remote hearings present some challenges to both courts and interpreters, they can also allow Washington's credentialed court

interpreters to provide professional interpretation services to courts anywhere in the state. It seems shortsighted to cut interpreter pay for these jobs, especially when many Washington courts have expressed concerns about being unable to hire enough interpreters to cover all their assignments in person. Lower pay means fewer interpreters willing to offer remote coverage for those courts.

We are also concerned about the way in which these proposed policy changes were announced. The proposed policy was distributed to some interpreters at an in-person-only meeting. Many interpreters who wished to participate but could not be present at that meeting felt excluded. The policy changes were then distributed to interpreters who had created accounts on the Moli app, but many remained uninformed. Rather than bringing the courts and interpreters together, these steps created more distance and confusion. It would be fairer and more transparent to notify all interpreters directly of proposed policy changes, not just a few. It would be simple to do, as Washington's Administrative Office of the Courts maintains a public directory of all currently credentialed court interpreters in the state.

NAJIT respectfully urges the King County Municipal Courts to reconsider and rectify the proposed changes in interpreter payment policies. We encourage you to collaborate with interpreters and their representatives to find a solution that upholds the principles of fairness and access to justice and affirms the crucial role of interpreters within the legal system.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
The NAJIT Board of Directors

Cc:

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