

ADVOCACY IN HAWAII:

Testimony in support of Hawaii HB600 HD1 requiring certification of court interpreters

The following letters of support were instrumental in garnering legislative support for the interpreter certification bill.



National Association of Judiciary
Interpreters and Translators

E-mail: Testimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov

TO: Sen. Clayton Hee, Chair; Sen. Russell S. Kokubun, Vice-chair; Senate
Judiciary and Labor Committee

FROM: National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators

HEARING: Feb. 2, 2007, 9 a.m., Rm. 229

RE: Support for SB 625, Relating to Court Interpreters

The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT), founded in 1978, is the only nationwide organization of active court interpreters. Current membership stands at 1100 and includes state and federal court interpreters of many languages.

We include among our stated purposes: a) to advocate training and certification of interpreters through competent and reliable methodologies, b) to promote professional standards of performance and integrity, and c) to advance the highest quality services.

NAJIT's membership supports certification as an objective, science-based method of testing to ensure that court interpreters meet *minimum standards* of competence. General consensus in the field holds that testing is an essential step to guaranteeing the provision of competent, cost-effective court interpreter services. These services are fundamental to equal access to the courts and linguistic due process for the deaf and Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals.

We agree with the publication of the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification: "*Court Interpretation: Model Guides for Policy and Practice in the State Courts*," which states "To address the causes of problems with court interpreting, comprehensive, statewide mechanisms and procedures need to be formalized by statute...." "Formalized testing of language and interpreting proficiency (certification testing) is the best way to assess interpreter qualifications." (NCSC, 1995, pp. 12, 89, available from http://www.ncsconline.org/D_Research/CourtInterp.htm).

We are aware that the Hawaii judiciary began examining court interpreter issues in 1994 and joined the Consortium in 1997. It is our hope that the pending legislation will definitively implement a certification program. SB 625 is a good bill, largely based on the Model Act in the NCSC report cited above. We believe it will put Hawaii on track to improve the quality of court interpreter services. With it, Hawaii will be able to create a meaningful, effective, cost-conscious and legally defensible court interpreting program.

We fully support this bill, which will mandate a court interpreter training, testing, and certification program. Please pass SB 625.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Alexander Raïnof, Ph.D.
Chair, Board of Directors
National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators



Testimony In Support of Court Interpreters

House Finance Committee
PERTAINING TO HB 600 HD1
Feb. 27, 2007, 1:45 pm

Hawai'i State Capital House Conference Room 308
Office of The House Sergeant at Arms,
Ph: 586-6500, Fax: 586-6501

Tessie Oculito, RN, President
Philippine Nurses Association-Hawaii (PNAH)
92-1269 Umana St.
Kapolei, HI 96707

To: The Honorable Rep. Marcus R. Oshiro, Chairperson
The Honorable Rep. Marilyn B. Lee, Vice Chairperson

Members of the House Finance Committee

My name is Tessie Oculito. As president of the Philippine Nurses Association

—Hawaii (PNAH), I am providing this written testimony on behalf of our more than 50 members to highly recommend the passage of HB 600 HD1, which proposes to certify court interpreters and to appoint and use certified court interpreters in legal proceedings. (HB600 HD1)

English is not the first language for most of our members, including myself. As nurses, we know firsthand the challenges of needing accurate interpretation, especially in medically related cases. Please support the passage of HB 600 HD1. It will build the capacity of our court system to ensure language access for everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,
Tessie Oculito, RN, President
Philippine Nurses Association-Hawaii