



June 26, 2023

Court Interpreter Program
c/o Mr. Jeff Shorba, State Court Administrator
State Court Administrator's Office
Court Services Division
25 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd, Suite 105
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Jeff Shorba and Court Interpreter Program staff:

The American Translators Association (ATA) is the largest professional association of interpreters and translators in the United States, representing more than 8,500 members working in over 90 languages.

We are writing in response to the public call for comments about the proposed revisions to policies 513(a) and 513(c). We would like to address concerns raised by our colleagues in the State of Minnesota in their June 16, 2023 letter to your office, and express our support and solidarity with the comments expressed by the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) in their June 23, 2023 letter on these changes.

We would also like to acknowledge the Minnesota Judicial Branch's commitment to equal language access as reflected in the change proposed in Policy 513(a)(I)(2) to "[p]rovide equal access to justice and a consistently high degree of interpreting for court proceedings." We commend you for recognizing how critical it is to ensure that limited English proficient (LEP) persons can participate meaningfully in the US justice system.

With regard to fair compensation, the current hourly rate of \$50 for certified court interpreters in Minnesota has not been adjusted since 1997. However, the cost of living nationwide has increased substantially since then, and interpreter compensation should be adjusted to match. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' CPI Inflation Calculator, \$1 in May 2023 has the same buying power as \$0.53 in June 1997. In other words, had the hourly rate been adjusted for inflation, it would be at least \$94.86 today. Moreover, these fees do not fairly reflect the value and scarcity of interpreter skills in your state.

The proposed payment policy under 513(a), which establishes rates for language conversion in different formats, pays individuals less the more different the language is from English and the farther away the culture is from American. We see this as discriminatory.



In addition to an hourly rate at fair market value, industry standards dictate that court interpreters are also entitled to minimum fees (usually a half day). Court interpreters must be scheduled in