NHCSL

THE NATIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS OF STATE LEGISLATORS

RESOLUTION

No. 2024-02

Fair Wages for Court Interpreters

Reported to the Caucus by the
NHCSL Government, Social Justice and Taxation Task Force
Rep. Leonela Felix (RI), Chair

Sponsored by Sen. Lorraine R. Inouye (HI)

Unanimously ratified by the Caucus on November 23, 2024

WHEREAS, court interpreters across the United States provide essential interpreting services, particularly in Spanish, to represent the voices of individuals who may otherwise struggle to communicate in court; and,

WHEREAS, the majority of court interpreters are contracted personnel rather than state employees, and their compensation is based on an hourly wage; and,

WHEREAS, court interpreters play an integral role in serving our communities, with a particular emphasis on the Hispanic communities, and their wages should reflect the significance of their contributions; and,

WHEREAS, as of February 2024, the national average hourly wage for court interpreters in the United States is $31-$32,[1] which may not adequately reflect the crucial role they play in facilitating communication and ensuring justice in our legal system; and,

[1] https://www.salary.com/research/salary/listing/interpreter-hourly-wages; see also https://www.salary.com/research/salary/recruiting/court-interpreter-salary

WHEREAS, in Hawaii, a state with one the highest cost of living rates in the United States, the hourly court interpreter wage has not increased since 2007; and,

WHEREAS, similar to Hawaii, several States across the United States have not raised court interpreter wages in accordance with inflating cost of living expenses; and,

WHEREAS, the cost of living in the United States has experienced a significant increase in recent years, making it essential to address the financial well-being of court interpreters; and,

WHEREAS, mileage reimbursement rates and commuter-time compensation rates for court interpreters have not been increased in several states across the United States.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators is committed to recognizing and valuing the vital contributions of court interpreters and acknowledges the need for equitable compensation that reflects the importance of their work in our justice system; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators recognizes the pressing need to increase wages, mileage reimbursement rates, and commuter-time compensation rates for court interpreters across the nation; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators specifically urges all states in the United States that have not already done so to swiftly revise and elevate their hourly court interpreter wages to at least $40/hour for entry level interpreters and $90/hour for the most experienced interpreters, as further modified by educational attainment, inflation and small area cost of living requirements; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators urges all states in the United States to amend their mileage reimbursement rate (or adopt a mileage reimbursement program if one does not already exist) for court interpreters to incorporate the annual standard mileage rate issued by the Internal Revenue Service each year; and,

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators urges all states in the United States to amend their commuter-time compensation rate (or adopt a commuter-time reimbursement program if one does not already exist) for court interpreters who travel one hundred fifty miles or more for one assignment to receive three-hours of their hourly fees as commuter-time compensation for the assignment.

THE NHCSL GOVERNMENT, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND TAXATION TASK FORCE UNANIMOUSLY RECOMMENDED THIS RESOLUTION TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR APPROVAL AT ITS MEETING OF MARCH 13, 2024. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THIS RESOLUTION AT ITS MEETING OF MARCH 24, 2024.

THE NATIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS OF STATE LEGISLATORS UNANIMOUSLY RATIFIED THIS RESOLUTION AT ITS ANNUAL MEETING OF NOVEMBER 23, 2024 IN DENVER, COLORADO.