



LOS ANGELES COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

SACRAMENTO LEGISLATIVE OFFICE

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June 28, 2023

The Honorable Tom Umberg
Senate Judiciary Committee, Chair
1021 O Street, Room 3240
Sacramento, CA 95814

ASSEMBLY BILL 432 (MIKE FONG) SUPPORT

Dear Senator Umberg:

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office is pleased to support Assembly Bill 432 (Mike Fong).

AB 432 requires the Judicial Council to develop a court interpreter training program and administer the training through a pilot program. The pilot program must also provide funds for coursework, interpreter exam fees, and a guarantee of court employment for pilot program participants.

Court interpreters help provide access to justice by providing language translation services during court proceedings. Although English and Spanish are dominant languages in California's courts, there are over 200 languages spoken during court proceedings and millions of residents with limited English proficiency.

In a 2020 report to the Legislature, the Judicial Council projected that language diversity in California will continue to grow, resulting in an increased need for court interpreting services. Despite the evident need for court interpreting services, there are currently less than 2,000 certified and registered court interpreters on the Council's Master List. Additionally, in 2019, only 40 individuals appear to have passed the bilingual interpreter exam (BIE), which is a requirement for becoming a certified court interpreter.

On average, 700 applicants take the BIE each year. The average pass rate for the BIE for certified and registered interpreters is between 6 and 14%. Nearly all of those who passed the BIE became certified to interpret in Spanish, while other languages saw very few new certified interpreters. While Spanish is undoubtedly the language with the highest demand for interpreters in the state, the Judicial Council notes that there is a strong need for interpreters in languages other than Spanish.

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AB 432 will help address the lack of registered or certified court interpreters throughout the state's courts by establishing the California Court Interpreter Workforce Pilot Program.

AB 432 will allow the Judicial Council to craft a training program for applicants, including identifying appropriate programs offered by a community college, state university or University of California campus, and exam preparation course options. The program must also develop an employment plan for each participant who completes the program, including a guarantee of employment at their assigned superior court.

The lack of qualified court interpreters is becoming a significant problem in our criminal court system. It is clear that there is a dire need for more court interpreters. The pilot program proposed by AB 432 should help address the lack of court interpreters and subsequently facilitate greater access to our court system.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact Daniel Felizzatto in my Sacramento Legislative Office at (916) 442-0668.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gascón", written in a cursive style.

GEORGE GASCÓN
District Attorney

cc: Assembly Member Mike Fong