

ata American Translators Association
The Voice of Interpreters and Translators

225 Reinekers Lane
Suite 590
Alexandria, VA 22314 USA
Tel +1-703-683-6100
Fax +1-703-683-6122
www.atanet.org

March 29, 2019

Rep. Jeff Leach
Texas House Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence Committee
PO Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768-2910

Dear Chairman Leach,

The American Translators Association, the United States' largest professional association for interpreters and translators, strongly opposes Texas HB 3627 and SB 2176 which, if approved, would lower the passing score on the Texas court interpreter oral exam from 70% to 60% for all licensed court interpreters in Texas.

One in seven Texans does not understand or speak English well enough to understand the charges and evidence being brought against them in a local or Texas court, effectively depriving them of equal access to justice. These Texans rely heavily on the services of qualified professional court interpreters so that they may communicate with attorneys and judges, and so that they may understand court proceedings in which they are involved. Texas, like the majority of states in the US, uses court interpreter certification exams developed by the National Center for State Courts' Language Access Services Section. Currently, "the minimum acceptable level for entry into the profession of spoken language court interpretation" is 70%. In proposing that this standard, "the minimum acceptable level for entry"—already a relatively low bar—be decreased to 60%, Texas runs numerous risks, including:

- Depriving limited English proficient (LEP) Texas residents of their right to informed participation in the judicial system
- Providing LEP individuals with interpreters who are unlikely to fulfill their obligation to convey information accurately and completely

In sum, we believe that by allowing LEP individuals to be served by interpreters who fail to accurately interpret 40% of what is said in a legal proceeding, Texas is gravely endangering the administration of justice. It is also possible that these interpreters' English skills are insufficient for the tasks at hand, preventing them from communicating accurately with judges, attorneys, and other English-speaking court staff. We ask you to confirm the right of approximately four million LEP Texans to qualified, professional interpreters in our courts, and we urge you to oppose these bills.

Sincerely,



Corinne McKay
President