

Attn: Steven D. Grierson  
Court Executive Officer  
Court Administration Office of the Eighth Judicial District Court  
2nd Floor – South  
200 Lewis Avenue  
Las Vegas, NV 89155

August 15, 2022

Mr. Steven D. Grierson:

The American Translators Association (ATA) is the largest professional association of interpreters and translators in the United States, with more than 8,500 members who work in over 50 languages.

Interpreters provide an essential and professional service to the courts mandated by both state and federal law. As small business owners, interpreters are responsible for paying for their own health insurance, Social Security, Medicare, and federal income taxes, as well as covering their own sick and vacation time and other expenses, including costs associated with keeping their certifications current.

It has been brought to ATA's attention that the compensation schedule for vendor court-certified interpreters in Clark County has only been nominally updated since July 2014 and is still lower than that used prior to 2010. It is also lower than in Washoe County and neighboring markets in Arizona and California. The cost of living nationwide has increased substantially since 2010, and interpreter compensation should be adjusted accordingly.

Interpreting is a demanding profession that requires significant training and investment in continuing education. As such, it is appropriate that interpreters be paid at fair market value, the definition of which is a price at which buyers and sellers with a reasonable knowledge of pertinent facts are willing to do business. If Clark County courts continue to offer rates below the fair market value, it may drive certified interpreters into other markets where their services are remunerated commensurate with their level of expertise. This may result in a decrease of available court-certified interpreters and, in turn, compromise due process in cases involving limited English proficient (LEP) individuals whom the court is mandated to serve equitably. Many highly skilled interpreters will seek to work elsewhere, and the gap will likely be filled by de-skilled, non-professional practitioners. Such a shift away from court-certified linguists raises the risk of errors, questions of accuracy, and costly appeals, putting taxpayer dollars needlessly at risk and exposing the Court Administration Office to liability for violating Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In addition to an hourly rate at fair market value, in our view, interpreters are also entitled to minimum fees (usually a half day). Certified and credentialed interpreters cannot be available on demand: assignments in settings like the courts require interpreters to arrive prior to their assignment and to be present until the case is called. Interpreters cannot accept other work for the scheduled time, and if an assignment is canceled, it is unlikely they will be able to fill that time slot with another assignment.

ATA supports freelance certified and credentialed interpreters in Clark County in their efforts to receive fair compensation and thus deliver interpreting services as reliably as possible. By paying less than fair market value and the rates offered elsewhere in Nevada, you may be undermining language access and due process. The compensation recommendations from the Nevada Certified Court Interpreter Advisory Committee of the Administrative Office of the Courts in Nevada would be a great place to start. To go a step further, the court could consider returning to the 2010 rate, plus reasonable cost of living and inflation adjustments.

We encourage you to take this matter under serious consideration. Do not hesitate to reach out for more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Sánchez", written over a horizontal line.

Madalena Sánchez Zampaulo  
President  
American Translators Association