

## California AB 432 – California Court Interpreter Workforce Pilot Program Template

Follow the instructions below, using the provided template as your guide.

### Hone your message in 3 parts:

**Tell** your legislator who you are and how your work as a language professional serves the community (and their district).

**Explain** why this bill is problematic.

**Ask** your legislator to consider the alternatives and that they speak to the sponsor and authors.

### Then:

**Send** your email to your legislators. Replace “firstname” and “lastname” with the names of your legislators, which you can find [here](#).

- For assembly members, use [assemblymember.lastname@assembly.ca.gov](mailto:assemblymember.lastname@assembly.ca.gov) and CC [firstname.lastname@asm.ca.gov](mailto:firstname.lastname@asm.ca.gov).
- For senators, use [senator.lastname@senate.ca.gov](mailto:senator.lastname@senate.ca.gov) and CC [firstname.lastname@sen.ca.gov](mailto:firstname.lastname@sen.ca.gov).

You can also **submit** messages of up to 2,000 characters on the CONTACT page of your legislators’ websites.

**Request** a meeting using the meeting request forms on your legislators’ websites. Fridays are often best because they are likelier to be working from their local district offices.

**Follow up** with a phone call to arrange your meeting.

**Report** back to the ATA Advocacy Committee on the outcome of your meeting by emailing [advocacy@atanet.org](mailto:advocacy@atanet.org). Share whether your legislator agreed to talk to the bill’s author and their reaction to the alternatives presented.

The template starts on the next page.

## AB 432 Response Template

[Date]

Dear [representative name],

My name is [name]. I'm a resident of your district, a practicing professional [translator/interpreter], and a member of the American Translators Association, the largest professional association of translators and interpreters in the United States.

[describe your professional background, who you serve, and why it's important]

I am writing today to express my opposition to AB 432 as it is currently written. The bill may feel like a step in the right direction, but it is far too vague.

Creating new pathways to increase the number of qualified applicants for employment as interpreters in California's courts is positive. However, this bill ignores multiple underlying realities, including the woefully low compensation offered to staff interpreters in the state, the existence of recognized, reputable training programs across the state (and across the country), and the inadequate number of state-level interpreter exam sittings. The California State Legislature would do well to rectify these issues instead, not try to reinvent the wheel with an untried and untested pilot program.

In many parts of the state, due to inflation and the increase in the cost of living, court interpreter salaries have gone down. Between 2007 and 2022, the average salary in Los Angeles County for certified court interpreters increased by less than 1% per year (\$73,000 to \$82,925). During the period from 2010 to 2020, cost of living increased by 38.7%, effectively cutting interpreter pay by more than \$20,000 (their 2007 salary in 2022 dollars would be \$101,944). According to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), this is 9% below the median wage in Los Angeles County.

[If applicable, add information about your own compensation]

In its present form, the bill provides for reinventing training options that already exist and contains vague language around whether the Judicial Council is planning to identify or propose an alternative to the existing court interpreter exam.

I am asking that you and your colleagues in the California State Legislature instead help advocate for higher pay and better working conditions for the 1,800 certified court interpreters across the 15 languages the state certifies, as well as the hundreds of registered interpreters who work in languages with no certification options. This would be a far wiser use of state resources.

Spending money on increasing current staff interpreter salaries and independent contractor fees would also do much more to attract qualified, reliable candidates, without watering down the talent pool or creating redundant training programs as proposed in this bill.

Here is a list of actionable alternatives to this misguided bill:

- Increase compensation to attract more candidates and contract interpreters to fill in the gaps.
- Offer grants to aspiring court interpreters for existing training programs. Dozens of reputable ones are currently offered, both inside California as well as nationwide.
- Make a list of these programs available on the Judicial Council website.
- Offer a state program to reimburse candidates for the cost of taking the state exam.
- Offer the oral exam more than just twice a year (the cost of additional exam sittings is surely less than creating an entirely new program to meet goals already being addressed by existing frameworks). As of my writing of this letter, exam dates for 2023 have yet to even be announced.
- Reimburse interpreters' continuing education expenses.

As a [certified/qualified translator/interpreter] in California, I ask that you as my state representative help amend this bill to help improve the compensation and working conditions of staff and contract interpreters in this state and thereby protect limited English proficient individuals' civil right to meaningful language access.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information. [I will follow up by requesting a meeting with your office and giving you a call].

Sincerely,  
[signature]  
[name]