

Interpreter Services Funding Task Force 2019

Funding Request Talking Points

Increase State Funded Interpreter Program

1. The judicial branch is requesting \$2.1 million for the state Interpreter Reimbursement Program so that more courts throughout the state receive financial help to hire qualified court interpreters. Interpreter services are fundamental to justice, providing the ability for all participants to meaningfully participate in court proceedings.
2. Funding for court interpreters is meant to be a partnership. The legislature established funding for the Interpreter Reimbursement Program in 2008 as a partnership between local courts and the State to provide 50% funding for interpreter services.
3. The program currently provides limited funds to only 20% of Washington courts. It's time to reaffirm our commitment to this partnership.
4. Increased funds will help additional courts, especially rural and small courts, access the program and support interpreter recruitment and testing to increase the number of qualified interpreters.

Increased Demand, Insufficient Local Resources

5. State funding has been flat since 2008, yet a recent study of Washington Courts found that the costs of providing interpreters is increasing. The number of languages courts are facing has increased 30% percent, with one court reporting 165 languages.
6. Small and rural courts often face a shortage of qualified interpreters in their communities, which can lead to unexpected interpreter travel costs that break the bank.

Due Process and Protection of Legal Rights

7. Individuals can face severe consequences affecting safety, health, families, housing, and finances if they're unable to access qualified interpreter services at the needed time in court. Availability of qualified interpreters from the beginning of a case can resolve minor legal issues before they become bigger ones.
8. A recent survey of Washington courts revealed that 59% of courts experienced delays in proceedings when interpreter services were unavailable. Delays cost the courts, community, and individuals. Delays may increase staff, attorney, and jail costs. Individuals may lose work days, struggle to find additional child care, or spend more time incarcerated.
9. Delays can be especially challenging for persons who are low income or who have health and mobility challenges.