



**MN JUDICIAL BRANCH**  
MN JUDICIAL CENTER  
25 REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BLVD.  
SAINT PAUL, Minnesota 55155

**JEFFREY SHORBA**  
STATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR

(651) 296-2474  
Jeff.Shorba@courts.state.mn.us

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Chair Latz and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of the Minnesota Judicial Branch, thank you for your interest in Minnesota's Court Interpreter Program and your consideration of our supplemental budget request related to this vital program.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is proud of our Court Interpreter Program, and is committed to ensuring that non-English speakers and those disabled in communication are afforded equal access to justice through the accurate interpretation of court proceedings. We value the staff and contract court interpreters who serve in our courts and who help deliver this service to those who depend on our courts.

As part of our supplemental budget request, we asked the Legislature to provide \$1.525 million in annual funding to:

- **Help meet the increasing demand for interpreter services in our courts:** The demand for court interpreters in Minnesota district courts has nearly doubled since 2019. The cost of delivering these mandated services has far outpaced legislative funding in this area.
- **Increase payment rates for contract court interpreters:** If approved, our supplemental budget request would have allowed the Judicial Branch to increase the payment rate for certified spoken-language interpreters to \$75/hour. This increase would have made Minnesota's contracted certified court interpreters among the highest paid district court interpreters in the country. This additional increase would be in addition to the 8% increase funded by the Legislature during the FY22-23 biennium.

Over the past several months, the Judicial Branch has held several meetings and undertaken significant communications with our contract court interpreter community. As part of those communications, we have talked extensively about our shared goal of ensuring our payment rates for contract court interpreter services are fair, competitive, and reflect our legislative appropriation. The Minnesota Judicial Branch cannot provide any increase in court interpreter payment rates without a legislative appropriation for that purpose.

As a result of our discussions with the contract court interpreter community, the Minnesota Judicial Branch has established a new **Statewide Interpreter and Language Access Committee**. The purpose of

the committee is to:

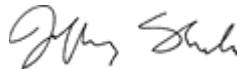
- Advise on updates to the Statewide Language Access Plan.
- Advise on translation needs and priorities and make recommendations.
- Recommend continuing education requirements for interpreters on the statewide roster and advise on other interpreter training opportunities.
- Advise on independent contract court interpreter recruitment efforts.
- Provide topic and trainer suggestions for future MJB training for Judges and other court staff.

We recently completed soliciting members for this committee by inviting interpreters from our statewide roster to indicate their interest in participating. Starting next month, we will be convening regular meetings to have ongoing conversations.

Once again, the Minnesota Judicial Branch is committed to ensuring timely access to court interpreters to all who need those services in our courts. We are grateful for the service and partnership of our state's court interpreters and look forward to working with them on this new Statewide Interpreter and Language Access Committee to ensure Minnesota continues to have a high-quality Court Interpreter Program.

We appreciate the Senate Judiciary Committee's interest in this important topic and urge your support in this and future legislative sessions for full funding of Minnesota's Court Interpreter Program.

With thanks,



Jeffrey Shorba  
State Court Administrator

**CC:**

Nicole Kaplan, Judiciary and Public Safety Committee Administrator