



May 18, 2022

Distinguished Judicial Council Member,

The community of Maryland court interpreters and the Maryland Interpreter Advocacy Committee (MIAC) respectfully request your attention.

As indicated by the Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts in their letter dated April 14, 2022, all registry court interpreters will receive a \$5.00/hour increase in compensation starting on July 1, 2022. We convey our sincere appreciation to the members of the Judicial Council and administrative staff.

Currently in Maryland, there are more than 415,000 residents who are deemed to be Limited English Proficient (LEP).¹ When these individuals find themselves in vulnerable moments of their lives, it is their right and our societal duty to provide equal access to the justice system. In practice, this means access to reliable, highly qualified language professionals in the Maryland courts. Unfortunately, the number and availability of court approved registry interpreters in Maryland has suffered continued attrition for years. One of the primary causes for this is related to compensation. (See MIAC 2022 advocacy paper²).

While the above-noted increase in compensation is a welcome gesture, it must be viewed in context; Maryland freelance court interpreters will still suffer a **38% loss in purchase power compared to 2004 when the last compensation adjustment was implemented**. In stark contrast, Maryland staff interpreters, with whom we work shoulder to shoulder daily, have seen a **34.8% pay increase over a 7.5-year period**.³ Considering the competitive employment environment and historic inflation, it comes as no surprise that the availability of skilled language professionals has been negatively impacted.

The Judiciary has a vested interest in attracting the best language professionals available to work for the courts, as this avoids needless appeals, higher costs to the state, and adverse impact on the public and private sectors.

The Great Seal of Maryland, visible in many a courtroom across our great state, depicts on its reverse the Latin motto "*Fatti maschii parole femine*," translated as "strong deeds, gentle words." May these words ring ever true in our halls of justice! We respectfully request that the Judiciary act decisively in a demonstration of "strong deeds" by adjusting compensation of contractual language professionals to maintain its 2004 value. By doing so, the court can demonstrate that diversity, equity, and inclusion are not mere buzz words to be bandied about as a false flag of enlightenment.

As a community of professionals, we stand ready to ensure access to due process for LEP individuals. Will you join us? **Help preserve the viability of the Maryland court interpreter profession, and in so doing, access to justice for hundreds of thousands of Marylanders.** The MIAC advocates signed below are poised and ready to present at the upcoming meeting of the Judicial Council on May 25, 2022, to answer questions, or otherwise engage directly.

Respectfully,

L. "Joel" Benningfield, Garrett M. Bradford, and Caroline Schutz

Maryland Interpreter Advocacy Committee

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¹ Migration Policy Institute. "Maryland." *State Immigration Data Profiles*. 2019. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/language/MD>

² Maryland Interpreter Advocacy Committee. *2022 Advocacy Paper*. 2022. <https://courtinterpreters.net/miac-2022-advocacy-paper>.

³ Administrative Office of the Courts. "Interpreter salary history from 2015 to present." *Email letter attachment from Bradley Tanner to Garrett M. Bradford in response to a Public Information Act request*. Maryland Judiciary. 11 May 2022.