



Judicial Council of California

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April 11, 2007

Hon. Dave Jones, Chair
Assembly Judiciary Committee
State Capitol, Room 3146
Sacramento, California 95814

Subject: AB 1726 (Assembly Judiciary Committee), as introduced – Support in concept
Hearing: Assembly Judiciary Committee – April 17, 2007

Dear Assembly Member Jones:

The Judicial Council writes in support of the concept of providing court interpreters in civil cases. Legislation to provide interpreter services in civil matters is critical to ensuring meaningful access to justice for all Californians.

As you know, current law does not require certified or registered interpreters be present in civil matters for non-English speaking litigants, yet, the issues at stake in child custody, child support, and other civil cases can be as critical as the issues involved in criminal cases where the law requires interpreters be provided. Litigants in most civil cases are unable to use professional interpreters unless they can pay for the costs of their services.

Essential to the Judicial Council's support of AB 1726 is the need for funding and the courts' ongoing concern that the shortage of qualified interpreters will impede full implementation of the bill. It will be necessary to prioritize the assignment of court interpreters to the most critical case types such as family law or small claims, until such time that sufficient interpreters and funding are available for all civil matters. One possible approach to mitigate the lack of full funding and interpreters is to phase-in the requirement that courts provide interpreters. Pilot courts could be identified or funding could be provided to a limited number of courts that are

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able to identify case management and scheduling changes or other administrative approaches to providing interpreters in the largest number of civil cases.

We would be happy to convene a meeting with you and key court staff that are expert in the coordination of interpreter workload in criminal cases to discuss these options with you. We look forward to working with you and your staff as AB 1726 moves forward.

Sincerely,



Eraina Ortega
Manager

EO/lb

cc: Members, Assembly Judiciary Committee
Mr. Kevin Baker, Committee Counsel, Assembly Judiciary Committee
Mr. Eric Csizmar, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of the Governor
Mr. Brent Jamison, Acting Director of Legislation, Office of Planning and Research