



Judicial Council of California

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May 21, 2026

Hon. Alex T. Lee
Member of the Assembly, 24th District
1021 O Street, Suite 6330
Sacramento, California 95814

Subject: Assembly Bill 1916 (Lee), as introduced February 12, 2026—Oppose

Dear Assembly Member Lee:

The Judicial Council regrettably opposes Assembly Bill 1916 which would add sign language interpreters to the Trial Court Interpreter Employment and Labor Relations Act “Interpreter Act” ([SB 371, Escutia; Stats. 2001, ch. 1047](#)).

In 2001, the Judicial Council supported the Interpreter Act as it provided for employee status for court interpreters while maintaining appropriate flexibility for the use of independent contractors, which enabled the courts to ensure critical language access to court users when employee interpreters are insufficient or unavailable. The Interpreter Act, however, was designed to apply to spoken language interpretation and many provisions in the act specifically apply to spoken language interpretation. As sign language interpretation requires more frequent breaks and often is team-based interpretation, there are concerns that the working conditions between spoken and sign language interpretation are different enough to require separate negotiations. By adding sign language interpretation to the Interpreter Act, the courts have serious concerns around being able to continue conducting effective and efficient bargaining negotiations. These two groups, while both providing interpretation, have separate employment considerations that are problematic for combined negotiations.

The majority of courts currently rely on independent contractor sign language interpreters and there are concerns that the time and day limits included in the Interpreter Act could limit the

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ability of courts to be able to contract sign language interpreters when necessary to meet the language access needs of court users. Under the Interpreter Act, non-opt out independent contractors must be offered court employment after being appointed for 45 court days by the same court during the same calendar year. Then, upon reaching a statutory 100-day ceiling with an independent contractor, the court cannot contract with that interpreter for the remainder of the calendar. This provision has been in effect for more than twenty years and has not appreciably increased the number of interpreter employees. For sign language, there are currently only nine employed interpreters in four courts and 43 certified independent contractors across the state. The real impact of the 100-day ceiling is a loss of interpreter resources as contractors must stop providing services for the remainder of the year. This results in end-of-year continuances and/or courts being compelled to bring in contractors from further and further away at greater public expense in order to conduct hearings. Adding more restrictions to an interpreter pool that is already too small will further hamstring the courts and limit language access for court users.

For all these reasons, the Judicial Council must regretfully oppose Assembly Bill 1916.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Morgan Lardizabal at 916-323-3121.

Sincerely,



Cory T. Jasperson

Director

Judicial Council Governmental Affairs

CTJ/ML/ad

cc: Andrew White, Legislative Director, Office of Assembly Member Lee
Matthew Fleming, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of the Governor
Michelle Curran, Administrative Director, Judicial Council of California