December 21, 2022

Dear Sybil and Narda,

We hope you are well and enjoying a happy and safe Holiday Season.

As you know, for some time MACI, along with some individual *per diem* interpreters have been clamoring for an increase of our rates of compensation or, at least, a cost of living increase. The clamoring has become quite strident lately, due to increases in the cost of all commodities necessary to daily life. *Per diem* interpreters working for OLA can no longer get by on what they earn working for the Trial Court. Many are accepting other jobs to supplement their incomes, sometimes at the expense of OLA assignments. Some turn down assignments that require long distance travel as the meager travel time compensation makes such jobs unfeasible. Others refuse in-person assignments in favor of remote work.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the value of a dollar earned in 2022 is only half of what it was in 2006, without factoring in the current 8+% inflation rate. This means that the $300 for a full day for certified *per diem* interpreters paid in 2006 is now worth roughly only $150.

We know that due to the ongoing lawsuit, you are sometimes unable to respond to our questions, as what you say might have a bearing on the lawsuit. However, compensation raises or adjustments due to cost of living increases are not a part of the lawsuit, and, therefore, do not impact the legal issues we have raised. We say this even though last year, when we were engaged in negotiations to settle all matters in the lawsuit, by agreement, we did include the issue of pay raises as part of the negotiations. We came very close to a settlement, the main sticking point being how much the compensation would be for a half-day vis-à-vis a full day. The Trial Court proposed a meager increase for the half day and a much higher increase for the full day. The overall increase for the full day was an acceptable amount, but the half-day amount was not. As you know, many interpreters, whether because their language is not in high demand, or they are not able to work full days for whatever reason, only work half days. These individuals would benefit very little and would be treated inequitably under the Trial Court’s proposal. Although we did not reach an agreement last year, we remain open to entertaining any new proposals.

However, let us set the lawsuit aside for the moment, and address the more immediate and urgent issue facing *per diem* interpreters today, as inflation surges. Remember that our financial situation also impacts the Trial Court, which must deal with both unavailability and increasing unwillingness by professional, experienced and very loyal *per diem* interpreters to go the extra mile, which in the past they have gladly done.

While our interpreters can no longer make ends meet, by comparison, the Federal Court *per diem* interpreter rates will increase effective January 1, 2023.

Since their last increase was 7 years ago, on October 1, 2015, the Federal Court will increase the rate for federally certified interpreters, for a full day, by 35.4% to $566 and the half day rate by 41.6% to $320. The hourly overtime was increased by 35.6 % to $80 per hour. Up until now, Professionally Qualified Interpreters had the same compensation rate as Federally Certified Interpreters, but now Professionally Qualified Interpreters will be paid $495 for a full day, $280 for a half day, and $70 per hour for overtime work.

For “Language Skilled” interpreters, the full-day rate will be increased by 73.3% to $350 and for a half day by 71.2% to $190. For these interpreters the overtime will increase by 25.7% to $44 per hour.

MACI is open to reaching an agreement regarding fair compensation rates, based on the long period of time (16 years) without a raise, as well as, increases in the cost of living as indicated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Sybil and Narda, we are aware that the setting of compensation rates is not within your power to decide, but we know that your opinion and support would go a long way towards persuading the Committee for the Administration of Interpreters to do the right and moral thing. We know that you have always been strong supporters of *per diem* interpreters and have often argued in our favor before the CAI. Within the Administration you two are the most knowledgeable regarding the work that we do and, therefore, the best qualified to present our case. Please do so, as *per diem* interpreters are in an increasingly untenable position.

We await your response.

MACI wishes you a joyful and safe Holiday Season and all the best for a Prosperous and Healthy New Year.

The MACI Board of Directors

cc. John Bello, Chief Administrator of the Trial Court

cc. Hon. John Locke, Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Trial Court and

 Chairman of the CAI