

Resolution for Increased Court Interpreters Access in Santa Clara County Courts

WHEREAS 20% of residents, or around 400,000 residents, in Santa Clara County are Limited English Proficient (LEP) and one in five members of our community need some form of language assistance to participate meaningfully in the justice system; and

WHEREAS a 2022 Innocence Project Study found that about 40% of Latinx exonerees who falsely confessed to crimes said that they “did not fully understand spoken English”, highlighting the importance of courtroom interpretation; and

WHEREAS although California has the largest court interpreter workforce in the nation, the number of court interpreter employees have been steadily decreasing. There were 799 court interpreters in 2021-2022, compared to just 717 in the year 2023-2024. In fact, the San Jose Hall of Justice averages two or three fewer interpreters per day than the minimum to run the courts properly. Many court interpreters have also reported inadequate compensation and unacceptable working conditions as reasons to limit their working availability. As a result, non-native speaker cases are more likely to experience significant delays;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Santa Clara County Democratic Party will advocate for adequate compensation, manageable caseloads, and acceptable working conditions for court interpreters across Santa Clara County courtrooms in order to improve the retention of court interpreters. The Santa Clara County Democratic Party will also support policies that prioritize hiring and recruiting more certified court interpreters and explore remote court interpreting, an initiative that has already been piloted across three California superior courts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to Members of Congress and local legislators who represent any part of Santa Clara County.

Submitted by Ariana Corbu