



December 6, 2009

Governor Chris Gregoire  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Gregoire:

The Washington State Court Interpreters and Translators Society (WITS) was founded in 1988 with the goals of improving the delivery of language services in the judicial setting and working for the good of language professionals. Today we have members who work in around 50 languages, and who live and work in every region of the state. Most of our members are freelancers who practice in various language-related fields, such as translation, localization, and medical interpretation, as well as court interpreting.

We are aware that DSHS is considering cutting funding for medical interpreters. We oppose this move for many reasons. Though we are acutely aware of the dire economic circumstances public and private entities face today, we feel that this is not an appropriate area for elimination. Access to health care is crucial for all, and meaningful health care is impossible without clear and complete communication between the medical professional and the patient. This, in turn, is only possible for limited-English-proficient patients if they have access to a qualified interpreter.

Washington State has long been recognized as a leader in many aspects of language access. WITS is proud to have been a part of this. Let's do whatever we can to keep it that way and to improve further.

There are certainly ways to make the provision of medical interpretation more efficient and more cost-effective. The leadership and membership of WITS stand ready to offer ways to improve the existing system rather than eliminate it.

Yours truly,

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