



October 12, 2011

Dear Legislator:

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, including medical interpreting, court interpreting, and many others. Most of our colleagues practice more than one such discipline.

We are alarmed to see that the Governor's budget once again cuts funding for interpreters for Medicaid clients. Such a cut would mean the end of the road for many hardworking interpreters, as well as the loss of federal matching funds. But more importantly, it would mean the loss of meaningful health care for 70,000 limited-English-proficient patients.

This year the legislature mandated that HCA and DSHS, by way of 2ESHB 1087, develop and implement a new model for delivery of interpreter services by January 1, 2012. Briefly, the model includes the following provisions:

- 1) The development of guidelines to assist medical practitioners to identify the circumstances under which it is appropriate to use telephonic or video-remote interpreting.
- 2) The requirement that the State contract with delivery organizations, including foreign language agencies, who employ or subcontract only with language access providers or interpreters working in the State who are certified or authorized by the State.
- 3) Provision of a secure, web-based tool that medical practitioners will use to schedule appointments for interpreter services and to identify the most appropriate, cost effective method of service delivery in accordance with the State guidelines.

WITS believes that HCA and DSHS must carry out this mandate rather than taking the short-term and ultimately dangerous solution of cutting this vital program. Further, this mandate is not optional to DSHS.

Let us remember that the DSHS interpreter program was born of a lawsuit. The State of Washington can ill afford another lawsuit forcing it to go back to doing what it was supposed to do in the first place: provide equal access without regard for race or national origin.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kenneth Barger', is written over a light blue background.

Kenneth Barger  
WITS Advocacy Chair  
kennethbarger@q.com  
206.778.1055