



National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators
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Ms. Soledad Becerril Bustamante
Defensora del Pueblo
c/ Zurbano 42
28010 Madrid / Spain

24 January 2017

RE: Complaint by APTIJ regarding interpreting services in Spanish courts

Dear Ms. Becerril Bustamante,

We are writing this letter in response to the complaint shared by APTIJ (Asociación Profesional de Traductores e Intérpretes Judiciales y Jurados). As an organization with a similar mission, we feel compelled to voice our support of APTIJ in this matter.

Our organization, the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) works to promote the highest professional standards in legal interpreting. NAJIT members include judiciary interpreters and translators, as well as conference, community and medical interpreters. While most of our membership resides in the U.S., some members live and work in Latin America, Europe, Asia and Australia.

While specific rules governing court interpreters vary by country, it is universally true that competent, professional interpreters ensure the fairness and integrity of judicial proceedings. This entails a good faith effort to locate available practitioners who possess the necessary qualifications and experience to interpret effectively in a legal setting. These qualifications go far beyond mere familiarity with the two languages at hand, and include a mastery of technical vocabulary, modes of interpreting and interpreter ethics and protocol. This highly-skilled and valuable work can only be done by trained professionals, who deserve to be compensated accordingly.

It is concerning to read APTIJ's description of the situation in Spain, as it mirrors similar challenges faced by interpreters in the United States. Budgetary and staff constraints create a pressure to lower costs, but the apparent savings from using agencies who provide lesser-qualified individuals do not justify the dangers poor interpreting poses to the liberty and property at stake for parties who rely on interpreters. Additionally, there are hidden costs associated with seemingly-affordable but unprofessional interpreting, including the costs of appeals or investigations should the interpreting rendered be brought into question by any of the parties.

We urge you to investigate this matter to determine if official action is needed. Hopefully, this will ensure that proper regulations are put in place so that parties with limited proficiency in Spanish are afforded equal access to justice via the provision of appropriate language services.

Sincerely,

Esther M. Navarro-Hall

Esther M. Navarro-Hall
Chair