

Policy of the Executive Committee of the Legislative Council

Limited Language Interpretation Services During the 2024 Legislative Session

February 23, 2024

1. Purpose

It is the policy of the Colorado General Assembly that the official legislative proceedings of the legislative branch of the Colorado state government be accessible to and usable by every person. Ideally, this should include language accessibility. Accessible language is communication that includes everyone, including people who speak English as a second language and who may need assistance overcoming language barriers. Language accessibility is necessary to help promote inclusivity and ensure Colorado constituents have equal access and opportunities to participate in committee hearings.

Of the nearly 5.8 million people who live in Colorado, over 900,000 residents speak a non-English language in their homes. In addition, nearly 390,000 residents are classified as having limited English proficiency. Those living in Colorado who do not speak English or have limited English proficiency are first and foremost Colorado residents and constituents. It is our duty to provide them with the chance to testify in official committee hearings under fair conditions. This includes but is not limited to, being provided with a qualified interpreter for full language accessibility.

During the 2024 legislative session, the General Assembly will provide limited language interpretation services to the public. The Legislative Council Staff will be responsible for coordinating language interpretation services for requests that comply with this policy and for as long as sufficient funds are available to provide the services. This policy is effective for the 2024 legislative session only.

2. Availability of Services and Request Process

Language interpretation services may be requested to allow witnesses to provide verbal public testimony in a legislative committee. Language interpretation or translation services will not be provided for other legislative proceedings, such as floor sessions, committee meetings at which public testimony is not scheduled to be taken, or non-legislative proceedings such as individual or stakeholder meetings with legislators, town hall meetings, or meetings with legislative staff.

Requests for language interpretation services must be made to the Legislative Council Staff, by phone or by email, at least **two business days** before the time the service is needed. For example, a request for an interpreter for a Monday committee hearing must be made no later than 4:00 p.m. of the preceding Thursday. Because the Colorado General Assembly relies on outside vendors to provide these services, requests for services made with less notice may result in an inability to provide the services being requested.

After receiving the request for interpretation, the Legislative Council Staff will attempt to contact providers to arrange services. The Legislative Council Staff will work cooperatively with a person making a request to provide services under this policy that will most satisfactorily meet the requestor's needs, to the extent the services are available in the area and there is sufficient time within which to arrange for the services. Interpretation requests for languages other than Spanish are dependent upon the Legislative Council Staff being able to schedule a vendor that provides interpretation in the requested language.

Advance notice will assist in ensuring the timeliness of a response to requests for services. Legislative staff will do their best to accommodate a request for services on less notice than specified above, but the requestor should be aware that difficulties in scheduling services may be encountered in accommodating a request. Staff's ability to furnish services will depend on the request, the specific language requested, the number of requests for services at any given time, and the workload of public and private sources upon whom staff must depend for the provision of services.

All requests for services should be made to the Legislative Council Staff by phone or by email as follows:

Legislative Council Staff
ATTN: Request for Spanish Language Interpretation Services
303-866-3521
lcs.ga@coleg.gov

3. Types of Services Available

A person may arrange for the following services by contacting the Legislative Council Staff.

Qualified language Interpreters. A person requesting a language interpreter must specifically indicate for which committee meeting the interpretation is requested, the date, and time, if known, during which an interpreter will be required, and the language for which interpretation is requested.

Interpreter over Zoom. A person requesting language interpretation may request the interpreter to attend the committee meeting over Zoom.

4. Services Not Provided Under the Policy

The Legislative Council Staff will not provide or arrange language interpretation services unless a person is in need of such services in order to provide verbal public testimony at a legislative committee hearing. This policy does not cover the translation of written materials, and Legislative Council Staff will not provide or arrange for the translation of written materials into languages other than English under this policy.

5. Availability of Funds

Services will be provided on a first-come first-served basis to members of the public until the \$10,000 funding allocation for limited language interpretation services is exhausted. When this

allocation is exhausted, the Executive Committee of the Legislative Council may specify another source of funding for interpretation services for the remainder of the 2024 legislative session. The Legislative Council Staff will keep a record of services provided. The Legislative Council Staff will provide timely notice to the Executive Committee of the Legislative Council if it appears that exhaustion of the \$10,000 funding allocation is likely.