



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

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Testimony of Stephen N. Ment
Human Service Committee Public Hearing
March 17, 2015

House Bill 6941, An Act Concerning State
Agency Interpreter Services

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Judicial Branch in opposition to *House Bill 6941, An Act Concerning State Agency Interpreter Services*. The bill would require state agencies, in this instance, including the Judicial Branch, to seek interpreting services first through the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS). Due to the unique needs of the court, we respectfully oppose this bill as it pertains to the Judicial Branch.

As members of the Committee may be aware, the Judicial Branch often needs sign language interpreters for court, on short notice, with flexible schedules. Unlike other entities where it may be feasible to schedule a DRS interpreter with 10 day notice, this is simply not possible for court. If a defendant shows up for an arraignment, and is need of an interpreter, the Judicial Branch must provide one, as quickly as possible.

While we appreciate efforts made by DRS to accommodate our needs, we cannot rely on the ability of DRS to meet our tight timelines. Therefore, the Judicial Branch contracts with a vendor for services in addition to procuring interpreters from DRS; we have done so without complaint from DRS. Interpreters provided by this contractor are nationally-certified and registered with DRS. Their services are particularly valuable within the court structure, where arraignments and other court events happen on short notice, because the contractor can holdover an employee, while DRS typically does not have this flexibility.

Given our concerns about DRS's ability to meet our needs, we respectfully request that the Judicial Branch be excluded from the bill's requirements. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on this bill.