

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1304

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL SECURITY, INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT AND MONETARY POLICY

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION &
INFRASTRUCTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON RAILROADS, PIPELINES,
AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

July 26, 2019

The Honorable William P. Barr
United States Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Barr:

We write to you to express our grave concerns and demand that the U.S. Department of Justice immediately rescind its plan to end the use of in-court interpreters for undocumented immigrants appearing in their first deportation hearings¹. The proposed change would jeopardize immigrants' rights to due process, worsen delays and backlogs as a result of confusion and lengthier appeals, and ultimately, compromise the integrity our immigration system. This change will do nothing to address the current backlogs, rather, it will exacerbate them.

The decision to replace human interpreters with pre-recorded videos at immigration court hearings as a "cost-saving measure," is simply dehumanizing and wrong. The National Association of Immigration Judges, the union that represents immigration judges across the U.S., further contends that the Administration's justification based on budget constraints do not justify the shift away from human personnel, especially after Congress recently appropriated an additional \$4.6 billion in supplemental assistance for border operations.

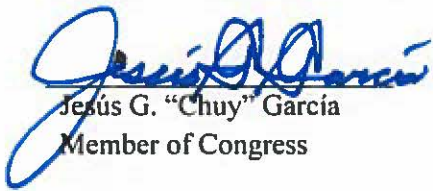
The role of an in-person interpreter is integral to providing people with access to due process and having a full understanding of the inalienable rights that form the basis of American values. A video cannot answer any clarifying questions that an individual may have regarding their human rights. For these reasons, the undersigned request a response to the following questions:

- As of June 11, 2019, have any immigration courts implemented the use of video recordings in lieu of an interpreter? If so, where is this plan currently in place, and what is the rollout plan and timeline for remaining courts?
- Are there alternatives to pre-recorded video briefings? Will non-governmental organizations be permitted to provide in-court interpretive services in lieu of pre-recorded videos?
- Please share any evidence the Department utilized to determine that ending in-court human interpreters did not violate individual's legal rights?
- Please provide evidence or analysis the Department utilized to determine that this policy change would result in cost-savings? Further, what is the estimated cost savings associated with ending in-court interpreter access?

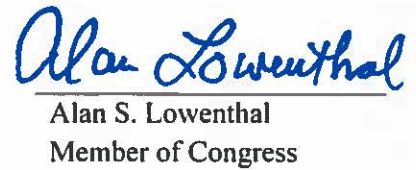
¹ <https://thehill.com/latino/451649-doj-wants-to-replace-immigrants-interpreters-with-video-explaining-their-rights-at>

We strongly urge the Justice Department to continue the use of in-court human interpreters and rescind any decision to curb or limit such availability. Any shift in current standards would greatly undermine immigrants' rights to due process and humane treatment. We look forward to prompt and complete response.

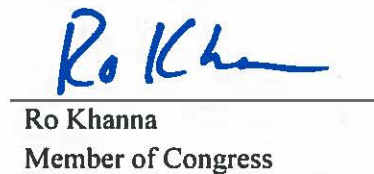
Sincerely,


Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress


Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

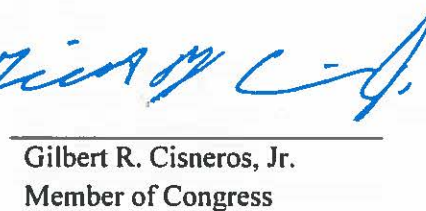

Alan S. Lowenthal
Member of Congress


Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Member of Congress


Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

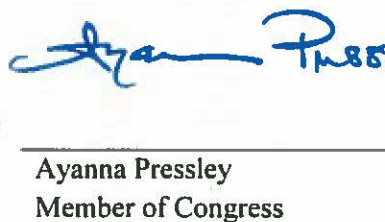

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress


Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

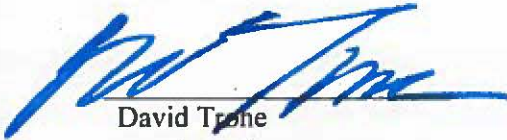

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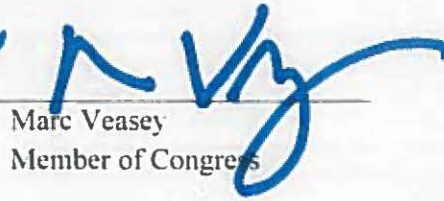
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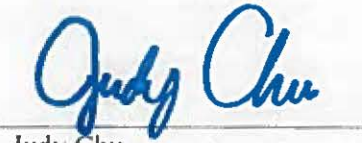

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