

GM547

Measure Title: Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Language Access Advisory Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, MARIA ARSUAGA, for a term to expire 06-30-2021.

Report Title: Language Access Advisory Council

Current Referral: CPH

**M. CRISTINA ARSUAGA
FEDERALLY CERTIFIED COURT INTERPRETER
HAWAII JUDICIARY MASTER CERTIFIED COURT INTERPRETER**

Carsuaga1@icloud.com

Phone: 808.425.4559
Cell Phone: 917.378.4617

February 27, 2018

**STATEMENT FOR SENATE CONFIRMATION OF NOMINATION
TO THE LANGUAGE ACCESS ADVISORY COUNCIL**

1. Why do you wish to be a member of the Language Access Advisory Council?

I have been a federally certified Spanish interpreter since 2000. I moved to Hawaii in 2016 and have been a member of the Hawaii Interpreter Action Network for the last two years. During my work as an interpreter in Hawaii and discussions with my colleagues, I have strived to inform myself about the challenges faced by the diverse Limited English Proficient population in all areas of our society, including health, education and justice. I believe that my professional experience and skills, coupled with the knowledge I have gained in Hawaii, could bring a fresh perspective and serve the Council well. I look forward to working with Council members from state government and non-profit agencies to help the Office of Language Access fulfill its mission.

2. How do you perceive the role and responsibilities of a member the Language Access Advisory Council?

The role of the members of the Council is to contribute to and facilitate the mission of the OLA. In order to do so, we must attend meetings, and educate ourselves on the matters at hand before such meetings in order to be able to participate in meaningful and productive discussions. I also believe it is our duty to listen to and cooperate with other Council members to accomplish the OLA mission.

3. In what ways do you feel that you can help protect the LEP population?

I can be of particular help to the LEP population in Hawaii by using my personal experience as an interpreter for 20 years to guide the Council on practical matters that involve interpreters, particular venues, and LEP clients. The best protection a LEP person can have is having the same access to information as an English speaking person. Ensuring quality interpretation and translation of documents is paramount to this end.

4. Given your understanding of the role and responsibilities of a member of the Language Access Advisory Council, why do you believe that you are qualified for the position?

As a Federally Certified Court Interpreter, a Hawaii Judiciary Master Certified Interpreter, I have 18 years of total experience working in federal and state courts, the last two years in Hawaii. I have worked as a Spanish spokesperson for the Better Business Bureau of the NY

Metro Area. Both jobs have afforded me the opportunity to be in contact with a huge number of LEPs, and I have experienced first-hand the difference high-quality language access can make for these communities.

I am an active member of the Hawaii Interpreter Action Network (HIAN) and the National Assoc. of Judicial Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT). I have attended meetings and conferences for both organizations, which have provided me with invaluable opportunities to update my professional skills and learn about the latest challenges and issues facing our profession and those we serve.

I am currently in ‘training to be a trainer’ for the State Judiciary’s Basic Orientation Workshops for court interpreter candidates held by the Office on Equality and Access to the Courts. Once I have completed the training, I will be in a position to contribute to the process of adequately preparing future interpreters for the important task of providing equal access in all the languages currently in use in Hawaii.

5. What do you hope to accomplish during your term of service?

I have been attending LAAC meetings since my nomination by Governor Ige in January 2018. I hope to learn much more about the policy side of language access, so that, in conjunction with my practical professional skills, I can become a well-rounded member of the Council. I also hope that my experiences as a professional interpreter who has worked at the highest levels in our profession can contribute to improving the standards of the translators and interpreters providing service to the LEP population.

6. Name three qualities that best describe you and that would make you stand out. How would these qualities benefit the Language Access Advisory Council?

1) High professional and ethical standards – When I make a commitment, I take it very seriously and do not waver. The Council can count on me attending meetings fully prepared to discuss the issues set on the agenda.

2) Respectful—I have already seen how accomplished the other members of the Council are. I will give my honest opinion while respecting others who may have other opinions or ideas, understanding that a diversity of perspectives is needed many times in order to come up with the best universal solution to an issue.

3) Approachable and gregarious. I can get along with many different personalities. In a multi-member council it is very important to be open to others and to work well with other members.

7. Name one previous experience that would make you stand out. How would this benefit the Language Access Advisory Council?

As an interpreter, I have had many experiences that have increased my awareness and respect for the struggles of speakers of limited English in our society, as well as for those who work with them to provide legal assistance, health care, and other services. My extensive experience with immigrants—legal and illegal—has made me aware of the

vulnerabilities of this population. The lack of an ability to communicate along with fears of immigration repercussions in some instances, are a barrier to the LEP population receiving services, legal and medical assistance to which they are entitled. A particular case I worked on in NYC brought this issue to the forefront: a tenant-landlord case in which the low-income tenants of the building had been living in deplorable conditions for years because the language barrier had prevented them from knowing their rights. My firsthand experience as an interpreter and spokesperson for these vulnerable populations (particularly the growing Spanish-speaking population in Hawaii) can help the Council find practical solutions that will further the mission of the OLA.

8. Can you foresee any possible conflicts of interest that could arise during your service on the Language Access Advisory Council? How would you overcome any possible conflicts of interest?

I do not foresee any conflicts of interest. If a possible or perceived conflict of interest were to arise, I would be the first one to bring it up with the appropriate person/persons.

To: Chair, Sen. Rosalyn H. Baker; Vice-chair, Sen. Jill N. Tokuda
Members, Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health

From: M. Cristina Arsuaga, B. A., Federally Certified Spanish Court Interpreter
State of Hawaii Judiciary Certified Master Interpreter, Tier 6

Re: **GM 547, SUPPORT**, M. Cristina Arsuaga to the Language Access Advisory Council

Date: March 7, 2018, 10:00 a.m., Conference Room 229

Sen. Baker, Sen. Tokuda, and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health, thank you for this hearing. It is an honor for me to be the subject of this GM, and to be here to meet you.

I am hereby seeking confirmation as a representative of Hawaii Interpreter Action Network (HIAN), a professional interpreters' association, to the Language Access Advisory Council (LAAC) of the Hawaii State Office on Language Access (OLA).

I was born and raised in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Just like Hawaii, Puerto Rico is officially bilingual. I had the great fortune to be raised in a bicultural and bilingual family, and to attend bilingual schools. I also had an opportunity later on to live in Europe, and learn French and Italian. I also lived and worked in New York City for many years.

My husband and I moved to Hawaii in January 2016, when the University of Hawaii hired him. Shortly after moving here, I joined HIAN in order to meet the local interpreting community and to educate myself about the unique challenges faced by my colleagues here. The two years I have spent working in Hawaii, discussing professional issues particular to Hawaii, and exchanging ideas with other members of HIAN, have proven to be very rewarding.

Since 2000, I have been actively working as a federally certified Spanish court interpreter. My interpreting assignments have been varied and challenging. They include assignments on all levels and all sides of our justice system, conference interpreting at UN assemblies and meetings, simultaneous interpretation on television (SAP), and private industry jobs. As a partner in a translation company, I provide Spanish written translation services to government, non-profit, and private industry clients. Since moving to Hawaii in 2016, I have worked as a court interpreter for the State of Hawaii Judiciary, as well as interpreting at conferences. (See my attached CV for more detailed information.)

My extensive and diverse background as a professional interpreter will allow me to contribute practical and well-founded advice to OLA as a member of the LAAC. I feel I can be of particular help in terms of policies and practices that will help ensure that interpreters and translators in the State of Hawaii meet acceptable professional standards in all languages. I can also provide counsel and answer questions regarding professional ethics in translation and interpretation. As an expert witness in federal court, I have testified on many occasions on the subjects of standards, accuracy, and professional ethics for translators and interpreters.

My personal access to language has opened great doors for me. I feel that it is time to give back. It would be an honor to have the opportunity to meet more people here who are concerned about language access and to contribute to the LAAC's discussions. Mahalo.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS
830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 322
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

March 2, 2018

To: The Honorable Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
The Honorable Senator Jill N. Tokuda, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health

From: Aphirak Bamrungruan, Executive Director

Subject: **GM 547** - Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Language Access Advisory Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, MARIA ARSUAGA, for a term to expire 06-30-2021.

Hearing: Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 10:00 AM
Conference Room 229, State Capitol

Agency's Position: The Office of Language Access (OLA) strongly supports the nomination of Ms. Maria Arsuaga to the Language Access Advisory Council (LAAC) to fill the seat of "one representative of a professional interpreter's organization" pursuant to Hawaii Revised Statutes Chapter 321C-7(a)(8) for a term to expire June 30, 2021.

Purpose and Justification: The purpose is for the consideration and confirmation of the LAAC Gubernatorial Nominee, Ms. Maria Arsuaga.

The mission of OLA is to address the language access needs of Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons and ensure their meaningful access to services, programs, and activities offered by the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of state government, including departments, offices, commissions, boards, and other state-funded agencies. OLA provides oversight, central coordination, and technical assistance to state agencies in their implementation of language access obligations – a civil right under both state and federal law.

The LAAC assists the Executive Director of OLA by providing input on implementation and compliance with Hawaii's language access laws and on the quality of oral and written language services provided under the law. The LAAC also offers feedback on a state agency's or covered entity's training of its employees who are likely to have contact with LEP persons; its policies and procedures for language services; its competency in working effectively with in-

person and telephone interpreters; and its understanding of the dynamics of interpretation between clients, providers, and interpreters.

Ms. Arsuaga is a current member of the Hawaii Interpreter Action Network (HIAN) and the National Association of Judicial Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT). She has more than 20 years of experience in the interpreting and translating profession and has been a federally certified Spanish interpreter since 2000. As a professional translator/interpreter, Ms. Arsuaga has provided language services in numerous areas including, but not limited to, financial, medical, and legal settings.

Furthermore, since moving to Hawaii in 2016, Ms. Arsuaga has been actively involved with the local interpreting community and has experienced firsthand the challenges faced by the diverse LEP population in all areas of our society such as health, education, and social justice. These experiences have increased her awareness and respect for the struggles of LEP individuals, as well as for those who work with them.

Ms. Arsuaga's passion, work experience, and advocacy for LEP individuals are assets she will bring to the council. Therefore, OLA respectfully requests your favorable consideration in confirming the appointment of Ms. Maria Arsuaga to the LAAC.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, CONSUMER PROTECTION, AND HEALTH
ATTN: CHAIR ROSALYN H BAKER, VICE CHAIR JILL N. TOKUDA**

**March 7, 2018, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 229**

in support of
Governor's Message 547
Relating to the Confirmation of Maria Arsuaga to the Language Access Advisory
Council

Aloha Chair Baker, Vice Chair Tokuda, and Committee Members:

My name is Avi Soifer and I am the Dean of the William S. Richardson School of Law. I submit this testimony in support of the confirmation of Maria (Cristina) Arsuaga to the Language Access Advisory Council on a personal basis and not on behalf of the Law School.

It is a genuine pleasure to write on behalf of Cristina Arsuaga, which I do entirely in my individual capacity.

I write to recommend Cristina with unequivocal and full-throated enthusiasm. Christina is a very accomplished person in multiple ways. She excels at language acquisition and retention. Her stellar record as an interpreter and her strikingly good language skills generally combine to make someone like me—who is not at all good at languages—very impressed and even a little jealous. Though I have only known Cristina for a short time, she is the kind of person who quickly stands out in a very positive way.

What perhaps most sets Cristina apart is how comfortable she is in knowing but not flaunting her striking ability to engage directly with a wide range of very different people. She has verve and a sparkling sense of humor, yet she is also down-to-earth and an eager and interested listener. In all my encounters with her over the past few years, I have been struck by how genuinely curious and open she is to learning from and about Hawai'i's diverse people and cultures. Though Cristina is by no means a shy person, she consistently has the good sense to hear people out. She also seems unusually wise in her responses. In other words, Cristina is a fast learner who is not quick to judge.

If she is selected, I have no doubt whatsoever that her colleagues on the Language Access Advisory Council will benefit substantially from her presence, as will Hawai'i. Cristina's many professional accomplishments are but one facet of the multiple contributions she will make. It is hard for me to imagine that there could be a more qualified candidate. Therefore, I strongly urge you to select Cristina Arsuaga for the Language Access Advisory Council.

Please let me know if additional details might be of use in your deliberations by contacting me at soifer@hawaii.edu or at 956-6363.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Aviam Soifer', written in a cursive style.

Aviam Soifer
Dean and Professor

HAWAII INTERPRETER ACTION NETWORK

P.O. Box 236024

Honolulu, Hawaii 96823-3519

hawaii.interpreters@gmail.com

To: Chair, Sen. Rosalyn H. Baker; Vice-chair, Sen. Jill N. Tokuda
Members, Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health

From: Marcella Alohalani Boido, M.A.
Hawaii Judiciary Certified Spanish Court Interpreter, Tier 4
President, Hawaii Interpreter Action Network

Re: **GM 547, SUPPORT**, María Cristina Arsuaga to the Language Access Advisory Council

Date: Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 10:00 a.m., Room 229

Chair Baker, Vice-Chair Tokuda, and Committee Members: Thank you for hearing GM 547, María Cristina Arsuaga for the seat representing a professional association of interpreters, on the Language Access Advisory Council (LAAC) of the Hawaii State Office on Language Access.

Hawaii Interpreter Action Network (HIAN) is extremely proud and honored that Ms. Arsuaga has agreed to represent Hawaii's professional interpreters on the LAAC. I had her in mind from her arrival here, but wanted to give her some time in Hawaii first. She has now been here for two years, and worked in both federal and state court, as well as at conferences.

Ms. Arsuaga is a federally certified Spanish court interpreter. This is the highest credential available to court interpreters in the U.S. The test has two phases. First, there is a written test in Spanish and English, which has a pass rate of around 18%. The second phase is the oral examination of interpreting skills.¹ Nationally, the pass rate for the two exams is 3.8%.

She has worked for years at the Southern District of New York federal court, which is well known for its high standards and for a very professionally run interpreting program. Cristina has also worked as an interpreter at the United Nations General Assembly. This makes her part of a very elite group of international conference interpreters.

Ms. Arsuaga's experience encompasses interpreting for people from the lowest to the highest social strata. She interprets a very wide range of material. In court, she interprets for defendants, judges, attorneys, law enforcement, and expert witnesses. At the UN, Ms. Arsuaga interprets for members of international elites. Both settings require adherence to the highest standards of interpreting and ethics. This broad background of interpreting in a variety of settings and for a very wide range of people is fairly unusual. It makes Ms. Arsuaga one of the most highly credentialed and experienced interpreters in the USA.

Her expertise in interpreting in general, and in standards and ethics specifically, will make her a valuable contributor to the LAAC. I'm extremely pleased that she has agreed to serve in this way. Ms. Arsuaga will make Hawaii proud to have her here.

Please approve Ms. María Cristina Arsuaga for a seat on the LAAC. Thank you.

¹ Federal Court Interpreters. <http://www.uscourts.gov/services-forms/federal-court-interpreters>. Accessed 3/5/2018.

PATRICIA J. HARPSTRITE
FEDERALLY CERTIFIED COURT INTERPRETER
HAWAII JUDICIARY MASTER CERTIFIED COURT INTERPRETER

46-045 Kuneki Place, Kaneohe, HI 96744
harpstrij001@hawaii.rr.com

Phone/Fax: 247-3578
Cell Phone: 347-8249

TO: Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Health
Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
Senator Jill N. Tokuda, Vice Chair

HEARING: Wednesday, March 7 at 10:00 a.m., in Conference Room 230

RE: SUPPORT GM 547, M. Cristina Arsuaga, Language Access Advisory Council,
Representative from a Professional Interpreter Association

I am writing in support of **M. Cristina Arsuaga** for the position of representative on the Language Access Advisory Committee (LAAC) from the Hawaii Interpreter Action Network (HIAN), an association for professional interpreters. As a former LAAC member myself, as well as certified interpreter for Federal Court and Hawaii State Judiciary and a founding member of HIAN, I have first-hand knowledge of the importance of having well-qualified, working interpreter/translators to contribute to the deliberations of the Committee.

Cristina Arsuaga is certainly one of the most highly qualified interpreter/translators residing in Hawaii. She is one of only two Federally Certified Court Interpreters and Hawaii Judiciary Master Certified Interpreters of Spanish in the state. Her experience includes interpreting in the state courts of New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and Hawaii, as well as the US District Courts of Southern New York and Hawaii. She also has extensive experience interpreting for national and international political leaders and diplomats in the United Nations and high level diplomatic conferences and nationwide television appearances. In addition, Cristina has worked as an interpreter/translator in the legal, financial, government, medical, technical, and advertising fields, and as an interpreter, reporter and voice-over artist for radio and television news and documentaries.

Cristina is a true bilingual, having learned Spanish from early childhood from her mother, and English from her father, both native speakers of their respective language. She was educated through high school in her native Puerto Rico. As a former professional singer of opera and classical music, she earned university degrees in Romance Languages and Voice Performance from Oberlin College and Music Conservatory in Ohio. Since then, she has received certificates from the University of Arizona Court Interpreter Training Institute and from New York University for completing a series of courses in English>Spanish Translation.

In January of 2016, Cristina moved here with her husband, who accepted an administrative position at the University of Hawaii. She joined HIAN soon after, and since then has worked as an interpreter for conferences as well as for the Hawaii State Judiciary and the Hawaii Federal Court. She has prepared written translations of informational materials for the city and state agencies and participated in the 3rd Roadmap Symposium on Building a Multilingual Workforce for Hawaii.

When I first met Cristina soon after she arrived here, I had no idea of her multiple talents and accomplishments until she shared her CV with me when she applied for the LAAC position in August of 2017. She is a very humble and down-to-earth person, a good listener and communicator. At the same time, she is a staunch defender of professional standards who is always willing to share her insights and lend help and advice to her colleagues.

In conclusion, I strongly support Cristina Arsuaga as a representative on the Language Access Advisory Committee. Her contributions to the work of the Committee will be invaluable.

Thank you,
Patricia J. Harpstrite