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OCT 07 2024

**CLERK OF SUPREME COURT
OF WISCONSIN**

Clerk of Supreme Court
Attention: Deputy Clerk – Rules
P.O. Box 1688
Madison WI 53701-1688

October 4, 2024

Re: Rule Petition 24-02

Dear Clerk:

The Wisconsin Muslim Civic Alliance (WMCA) writes in support of the Petition filed by Wisconsin Justice Initiative requesting expanded interpreter services in Wisconsin's municipal courts. Ensuring that individuals with limited English proficiency have access to a qualified interpreter is vital to these individuals' due process rights.

WMCA supports policies that provide accommodations and equal access to resources to populations that may be at a disadvantage in the court system. While WMCA is dedicated to promoting policies that enhance the well-being of the Wisconsin Muslim community, our goal is to address disparities and promote equity for all. Interpreter services in municipal courts are vital for populations whose households primarily speak languages other than English. Municipal courts' enforcement of various ordinances can have a lasting impact on an individual's life. Qualified interpreters are necessary for these individuals to effectively advocate for themselves during municipal court proceedings, given that many defendants appear without an attorney in these proceedings.

WMCA was surprised to learn that municipal courts are currently only required to provide qualified interpreters in juvenile matters. Other defendants have to rely on family or friends, sometimes juveniles themselves, to assist in interpretation during the proceeding. These family members or friends are often not familiar with the technical legal terms of the proceeding. The disadvantages in this situation are already great for people unfamiliar with the legal system and become greater with the lack of understanding of the language being used in an already intimidating courtroom environment.

Given Wisconsin's growing diverse community, this issue can affect the many different cultural populations across the state. At WMCA, we advocate for more than 70,000 Wisconsin Muslims that come from a range of different cultural backgrounds. It is essential that any person with limited English proficiency, Muslim or Non-Muslim, be given access to a qualified interpreter if they find themselves at a municipal court proceeding to ensure the fair implementation of due process rights. Any necessary costs to the municipal court in obtaining a qualified interpreter are reasonable because of the due process rights at play.

The WMCA urges the Court to expand the access of interpreter services in Wisconsin's municipal courts. Expanding these services will ensure that the municipal court system functions in a fair and just manner for all individuals. Thank you for considering WMCA's comments regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Wisconsin Muslim Civic Alliance

/s/

Fauzia Qureshi
Executive Director, WMCA

/s/

Fatima Malik
Policy Lead, WMCA