

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

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 hearings<sup>1</sup>. 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 of 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:

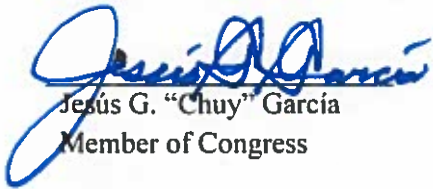
- As of June 11, 2019, have any immigration courts implemented the use of video recordings in lieu of an interpreter? If so, where is this plan currently in place, and what is the rollout plan and timeline for remaining courts?
- Are there alternatives to pre-recorded video briefings? Will non-governmental 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?

---

<sup>1</sup> <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.

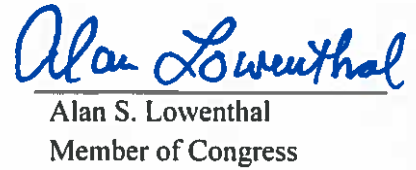
Sincerely,



Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



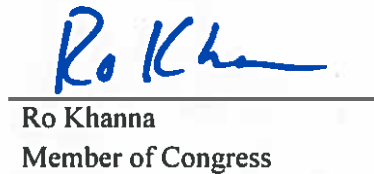
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



Alan S. Lowenthal  
Member of Congress



Debbie Mucarsel-Powell  
Member of Congress



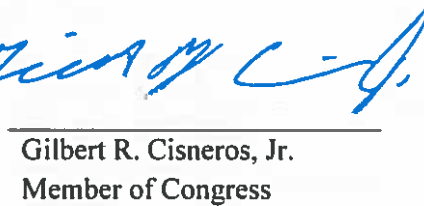
Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



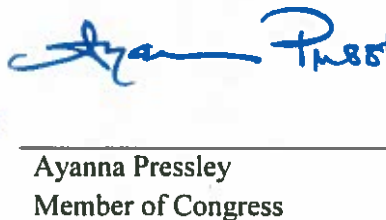
Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragan  
Member of Congress



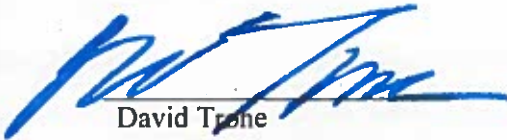
J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



David Trone  
Member of Congress



Susan A. Davis  
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



Darren Soto  
Member of Congress



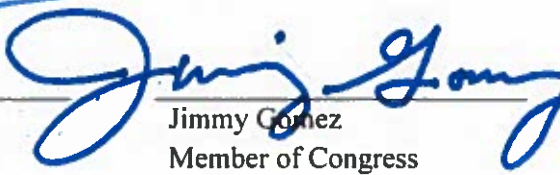
Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress



Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress



Sylvia Garcia  
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress



David Price  
Member of Congress



André Carson  
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress




Grace Meng  
Member of Congress




Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress




Adam Smith  
Member of Congress

  
Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress

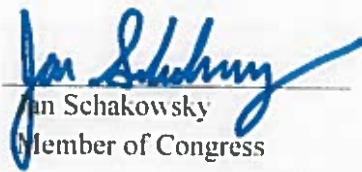
  
Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress


  
Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress

  
Doris O. Matsui  
Member of Congress


  
Marc Veasey  
Member of Congress

  
José E. Serrano  
Member of Congress


  
Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

  
Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

  
Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress

  
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

  
Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress

  
David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress