



U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

950 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20530

February 29, 2024

Director Cynthia Clanton
Georgia Judicial Council/ Administrative Office of the Courts
244 Washington Street SW, Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Director Clanton:

This letter notifies you that the Federal Coordination and Compliance Section (FCS) in the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) received a complaint alleging a potential violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d to 2000d-7, and its implementing regulations, 28 C.F.R. Part 42, Subpart C (Title VI). Title VI requires recipients of federal financial assistance to take reasonable steps to provide language assistance services to ensure individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) have meaningful access to the recipient's program or activity.

[REDACTED]

While we are not making any determinations as to whether [REDACTED] is limited English proficient or whether the [REDACTED] has violated Title VI or its implementing regulations, we wanted to reach out to remind you of your Title VI obligations. We recognize that the Georgia courts have a commitment to providing language access to limited English proficient individuals through the Supreme Court of Georgia's Rule on Use of Interpreters for Non-English Speaking and Hearing Impaired Persons, *Rule 7.3 - Interpreters*, Ga. R. Super. Ct. 7.3 and the Georgia Administrative Office of the Courts' *Model Administrative Protocol for the Provision of Language Assistance Services for Limited English Proficient and Deaf/Hard of Hearing Persons in Georgia Courts*. Therefore, we hope that by providing you with this information you will ensure that appropriate steps are being taken to ensure meaningful language services are being provided to all court users including [REDACTED]

When determining whether an individual is limited English proficient, we advise courts to assess whether an individual is having trouble understanding what is being stated in English and requires the assistance of an interpreter. Courts should also err on the side of caution and provide an interpreter free of charge to all court users who state that they are limited English proficient and need the assistance of an interpreter during their proceedings.

[REDACTED]

Title VI also prohibits retaliation by recipients, which includes any actions to “intimidate, threaten, coerce, or discriminate against any individual . . . [who] has made a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in an investigation . . .” 28 C.F.R. § 42.107(e). A victim of retaliation can be someone other than the victim of the discrimination alleged in the original Title VI complaint or a member of the protected class. Individuals who believe that they have been a target of retaliation may file a complaint with DOJ.

As mentioned, we have made no determination as to compliance with Title VI. However, FCS has worked with state and local court systems informally across the country to address concerns involving language barriers for people with LEP under Title VI outside of a formal investigation. If you have any questions about your Title VI obligations or if we can be of assistance in ensuring you provide meaningful language access to all court users, please contact Andrea Plewes at Andrea.Plewes@usdoj.gov or Anisa Rahim at Anisa.Rahim@usdoj.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christine Stoneman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christine Stoneman
Chief, Federal Coordination and Compliance Section
Civil Rights Division
U.S. Department of Justice

cc: Aileen Bell Hughes, Assistant U.S. Attorney, U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Northern District of Georgia (via e-mail)