October 24, 2014

Department of Homeland Security,

Re: Language Access Plans

As members of the American Translators and Interpreters Association (ATA), we appreciate your efforts to develop Language Access Plans for all your missions and functions. We welcome the implementation of the processes that aim to improve the quality of the communication and services provided to the Limited English Proficiency Population (LEP). The Interpreters Division of ATA has approximately 4000 members. As their representatives, we would like to support you in implementing these services with the highest standards of interpreting practices.

After reading your twelve Language Access Plans (LAPs), we would like to offer our perspective on some of the most relevant issues.

1. Professional Standards of Practice: There are already professional interpreters that follow specific standards and a code of ethics. Your different missions and functions may be able to find trained professionals that might just need to get immersed into the specific cultural and linguistic aspects of the specific job.
2. Process Transparency: Being fully bilingual does not even begin to define what it means to be an interpreter. Cultural awareness and in depth knowledge of the interpretation process and stages are an absolute necessity when providing interpretation services to LEP individuals. Process transparency helps overcome the barriers associated with culture and it is the only way to guarantee that the communication remains between the LEP and the English speaking person.
3. Professional Liaison: ATA has nearly 11,000 members in 95 countries. ATA’s translator certification is highly respected in the industry and is available in 26 language pairs. Many of ATA’s members are certified interpreters in a variety of fields, making ATA the only umbrella organization with all types of language professionals. ATA’s online directory ([www.atanet.org](http://www.atanet.org)) with 7000 profiles is the most comprehensive directory for language professionals.

As professional interpreters, our mission is to overcome language barriers so that the LEP members of our society can have equal access to services. This falls under your vision of preserving the individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law to all members of society, thus, we see an outstanding potential in joining your initiative as stakeholders.

We look forward to collaborating with you in the future.

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Members of the Leadership Council of the Interpreters Division and the American Translators Association