

**STATE OF MAINE JUDICIAL BRANCH
LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Type: Standing Committee
Established: August 7, 2012
Revised: December 22, 2022
Chair: Nickole M. Wesley, Communication Access Specialist
Report Date: Annually (on October 1)
Reports to: Chiefs & Supreme Judicial Court

Background

Maine has become increasingly diverse, and the Maine Judicial Branch continues to respond to the needs of a more diverse community. In addition, the Judicial Branch continues to respond to the needs of Maine’s deaf, late-deafened, and hard of hearing communities. Assuring language and hearing access to justice requires planning and a consistent commitment to quality services in court proceedings.

Supported and encouraged by the Justice Action Group, the Judicial Branch has implemented policies and Administrative Orders related to language and hearing access. In recent years, the Judicial Branch has improved its capacity to address Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and cultural competency issues in a more direct and structured way, including the creation of an “Access Team” made up of the Director of Court Services, the Court Access Coordinator, and the Communication Access Specialist. This team’s primary goal is to identify and remove barriers that may affect access to justice.

The creation of this Standing Advisory Committee is intended to assist the Administrative Office of the Courts, judicial leadership, trial court judges, and the rest of the Judicial Branch personnel with issues associated with access to the court system by LEP individuals.

I. Purpose:

The purpose of the Limited English Proficiency Advisory Committee is to advise Judicial Branch leadership in developing and maintaining a comprehensive system for providing and improving access to Maine courts for individuals with limited English proficiency or hearing loss.

II. Authority and Responsibilities:

The Advisory Committee may seek input, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals and groups within and outside of the Judicial Branch. The Advisory Committee is authorized to study procedures considered by or in effect in other court systems and any other model procedures. It is authorized to consult with any person or organization as necessary.

The Advisory Committee will:

- A. Review the current state of LEP and interpretation services in the Judicial Branch;
- B. Assist in the prioritization of needed improvements;
- C. Make recommendations regarding LEP policies and resources, including the Language Access Plan for the Judicial Branch;
- D. Identify additional resources, including grant funding sources, to improve access to Maine courts;
- E. Recommend new initiatives and pilot projects as ways to improve services provided by the Judicial Branch;
- F. Provide strategic support for requests that require legislative approval; and
- G. Make recommendations to the State Court Administrator, the Trial Court Chiefs, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court.

III. Membership:

The membership on the Committee shall include the following, and may be augmented or modified from time to time at the request of the Chair with the approval of the Supreme Judicial Court. Members are appointed for three-year terms by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court, and may be reappointed for up to three additional terms by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court.

Clerk of Court

Judicial Branch Employee with background in communication access

State Judicial Marshal Representative

Justice, Maine Superior Court

Judge, Maine District Court

Immigration Attorney

Community stakeholder representatives engaged in LEP issues, including the deaf community

Communication Access Specialist
Court Access Coordinator
Director, Court Services
Justice, Maine Supreme Judicial Court, Liaison

IV. Meetings:

The LEP Advisory Committee will meet on a schedule established by the Chair, but no less often than three times a year. The Chair may also establish subgroups to study designated issues and report recommendations for consideration by the Committee as a whole. Those subgroups will meet on a schedule established by the Chair. The Committee may use video conferencing to assist with meeting capacity.

V. Reporting:

The LEP Advisory Committee will submit a written report of its progress to the Supreme Judicial Court annually on October 1 or as otherwise requested.

VI. Committee Duration:

The LEP Advisory Committee will be a Standing Committee of the Judicial Branch.

Dated: December 22, 2022

Approved by:



Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill
Maine Supreme Judicial Court

**JUDICIAL BRANCH
LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Membership Roster**

Term expires October 1, 2023:

Hon. Robert E. Mullen, Chief Justice, Maine Superior Court or designee
Abeir Ibrahim, Co-Founder, Cross Cultural Consulting Group
Francine Ngabu, President, Maine Association for New Americans
Anna R. Welch, Esq., Sam L. Cohen Refugee and Human Rights Clinical Professor,
Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic, University of Maine School of Law

Term expires October 1, 2024:

Hon. Jennifer Archer, Judge, Maine District Court
Hon. Maria Woodman, Judge, Maine District Court
Ted Ross, Chief Deputy, State Judicial Marshals
Fatuma Hussein, Executive Director, Immigrant Resource Center of Maine
Michelle Ames, MHRTC, ESC, ASLPI 4,
Program Director: Deaf Services, Disability Rights Maine
André R. Frechette III, Administrative Clerk, Lewiston District Court
Constant Kabuyenge, Rostered Court Interpreter, Interpreter Coach
Luis Garcia, MD, Federally Certified Court Interpreter

Standing Members:

Nickole M. Wesley, Communication Access Specialist, Chair
Allison Gray, Esq., Court Access Coordinator
Richard E. Record, Jr., Director, Court Services

Hon. Catherine R. Connors, Associate Justice, Maine Supreme Judicial Court Liaison