



**Republic of the Philippines**  
**Supreme Court**  
**Office of the Court Administrator**  
**Manila**

**OCA CIRCULAR NO. 106-2022**

**TO : ALL COURT USERS, JUDGES AND PERSONNEL  
OF THE FIRST AND SECOND LEVEL COURTS,  
AND MEMBERS OF THE BAR**

**SUBJECT : CONDUCT OF VIDEOCONFERENCING  
HEARINGS IN CASES INVOLVING DEAF  
LITIGANTS AND WITNESSES**

In his letter addressed to the Honorable Chief Justice Alexander G. Gesmundo, Chairman Arthur P. Casanova of the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino, in consultation with the Philippine Federation of the Deaf and the Philippine National Association of Sign Language Interpreters, requests that deaf parties and their sign language interpreters be exempted from in-court hearings and be allowed to appear during hearings via online videoconferencing. According to Chairman Casanova, the in-court hearing requirement of wearing facemasks seriously hamper the communicative function of the Filipino Sign Language (FSL), a visual-spatial true language, which depends on linguistic/grammatical information not only in the hands, but also in all the complex and coordinated movements of the face, head, and body called nonmanual signals. With the masks on, the deaf witness is likely to experience great difficulty understanding the interpreter and conversely being understood by the interpreter. There will be a decrease in the effectiveness, accuracy, and speed of communication between the deaf signer and the interpreter. Moreover, the social distancing requirement imposes additional challenges to both the deaf parties and the sign language interpreters because visual acuity is hampered by distances of one (1) meter or greater.

Considering the aforementioned exceptional circumstances of deaf litigants and witnesses, and Item I (3) (b) (ix) of A.M. No. 20-12-01-SC (Re: Proposed Guidelines on the Conduct of Videoconferencing) which sanctions the conduct of videoconferencing hearings “[w]hen, based on the sound judgment of the court, there are compelling reasons that justify the resort to videoconferencing,” all concerned Judges are **ENCOURAGED** to allow the conduct of videoconferencing hearings in cases involving deaf litigants and witnesses.

For strict observance.

11 May 2022



RAUL BAUTISTA VILLANUEVA  
Court Administrator