

History of the Tony Winsor Award

Attorney Tony Winsor worked for Massachusetts Law Reform Institute and dedicated his 39 years of practice to advocating for the disadvantaged. Attorney Winsor worked endlessly on many cases and battles, but the battle most near and dear to medical interpreters was leading the task of passing the Massachusetts Emergency Room Bill signed into law as Chapter 66 of the Acts of 2000. The law states that all hospitals which provide acute care in emergency rooms or in acute psychiatric services must use competent interpreter services when treating non-English speaking patients. The passing of Chapter 66 of the Acts of 2000 was the forward thrust to professionalize medical interpreters and ultimately allowing disadvantaged patients to have a voice and seek quality care.

MassAHEC Network established the award for medical interpreters in Tony Winsor's name in 2015. The purpose of this award is to honor a person who, like Tony Winsor, has advocated for professionalizing the work of a medical interpreter to improve language access for all persons. The contributions to the field of medical interpreting may include advocating for the utilization of medical interpreters, providing education for medical interpreters, or promoting the work of medical interpreters.



Massachusetts Medical Interpreter Training

Helping bridge communication barriers faced by patients accessing health care services.

2022 Paving the Way to Health Care Access: Two Days of Learning for Interpreters

Tony Winsor Award Recipient for 2022 Avlot Qessa

Words from Committee:



Avlot became a medical interpreter in Massachusetts during the infancy of our profession. As a Haitian immigrant, he minored in Spanish and later pursued formal interpreter training in Spanish because there were no programs open for Haitian Creole or other minority languages. From 1994 to 1997 he worked as a contract and per diem medical interpreter at many Boston-area institutions, including Deaconess Hospital,

Boston Children's Hospital, Franciscan Children's Hospital, Brigham and Women's, Tufts New England Medical Center, and the MA Department of Mental Health. From 1997-2001, he worked as a staff medical interpreter at Harvard Vanguard. In 2001, he joined the multilingual interpreting program at Cambridge Health Alliance as an interpreter educator. In his work as a trainer for CHA and with various community and college-based programs, Avlot helped develop some of the first training tools for Haitian interpreters available anywhere, as well as numerous cultural and linguistic education modules for healthcare providers and support staff. Avlot has done so much to expand healthcare access for LEP patients, particularly those speaking languages of lesser diffusion, and to raise the profile (and secure the jobs) of healthcare interpreters, not just at CHA, but in the community at large.