



*Council of the District of Columbia
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October 6, 2008

The Honorable Chairman Vincent C. Gray
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 504
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairman Gray:

On September 24, 2008, the Committee on Workforce Development and Government Operations held a public oversight hearing on "*The Enforcement and Effectiveness of the Language Access Act—A Year in Review*". The testimony, which was presented by a diverse group of witnesses, including members from legal advocacy groups and limited and no-English proficient residents of the District, painted a pretty dismal picture of how the government is complying with the Language Access Act.

I greatly appreciated the involvement of the affected and concerned members in our community who testified at the hearing. We heard stories of individuals wrongfully arrested, denied healthcare and of overall isolation from their community due to their limited or no-English proficiency. According to the witnesses and the Director of the Office of Human Rights, some agencies are failing to adequately provide vital information and services to the limited and no-English proficient members of the District. Currently, only one agency, the Office of Human Rights, is in full compliance with the provisions of the Act. Given my position as Chair of the Committee on Workforce Development and Government Operations, I am limited to discussing this issue only with the agencies under the purview of the Committee and call upon the cooperation of my fellow Councilmembers.

I would respectfully suggest your consideration and those of my fellow Committee chairs to look at agencies under their respective purview to see if they are in compliance with the Language Access Act. Ensuring that all the residents in the District

have access to all the public services provided is an area of concern that I'm sure you would agree warrants our attention. Thank you for your support of this critical matter.

Sincerely,



Carol Schwartz

Councilmember, At-Large

Chair, Committee on Workforce

Development and Government Operation:

cc: All Councilmembers

Cynthia Brock-Smith, Secretary to the Council