

Dear Friend of the D.C. Language Access Coalition,

During the holiday season, many of us take time to reflect on the things that we are thankful for. Especially in these troubled economic times, we focus on things like our education, our health and well-being, and our families and friends. We must not forget, however, that there are some people living in our very own communities who cannot even count on these blessings...

- Imagine that you are a young woman, 8 weeks pregnant. You begin to bleed and, fearing that your baby's life is in danger, you head to the hospital for help. You leave hours later with a prescription for a medicine to treat chlamydia, an STD, and have no clear answers about what happened or if you and your baby will be okay because no one took the time to explain it to you.
- Next, imagine that you are a middle-aged man. You are awoken in the middle of the night by police officers who come into your home to arrest you. Knowing that you have done nothing wrong, you ask why you are being arrested, but no one is willing to explain it to you. You are released from jail a few days later, still with no explanations, only to find out later that the police had the wrong person.
- Finally, picture yourself as a teenager, back in high school. As you sit in class, you do not understand anything the teacher is saying. You understand the math problem in front of you, but you do not understand what the assignment is or how your teacher is going to grade your work so you rarely turn in any schoolwork. Despite this, your teachers give you passing grades to push you through the system. You are about to graduate high school and you are scared because you do not feel like you have the skills to be a responsible adult.

These scenarios may seem shocking or even made-up, but we at the D.C. Language Access Coalition, we encounter people who face these realities every day, all because they do not speak English very well and are not provided with the proper supports to integrate into our society. For the past 6 years we have worked and continue to work tirelessly to ensure that in situations like the stories above, people are given access to their civil rights and provided with interpretation services as well as translated documents so that they can understand what is going on around them and effectively participate in our society.

We are writing to you because we believe that you are like us – you are a person who is aware of human rights and issues of social justice. You understand the importance of our mission and work, and empathize with the thousands of people in communities around us who are unable to fulfill their most basic needs because of language barriers.

Who do we work with?

- The Korean speaking auto-mechanics or dry cleaners who moved here to give their children more opportunities than they had growing up.
- The Amharic speaking Ethiopians who own restaurants, valet parking garages, taxi cabs and other hard-working businesses, who want to stay employed so they can provide food for their families.

- The Vietnamese families who are still working towards the “American Dream” after they were repatriated to this area as refugees of the Vietnam War.
- The Spanish speaking domestic workers who work for many wealthy political families living in Washington, D.C. and want to be able to access quality healthcare so they can stay healthy and provide for their own families.
- The French speaking Africans who have law degrees and sit on boards of charter schools, and want to know their rights when they move into an apartment building so that they can create a tenant association and become active in the community that they live in.
- The elderly Chinese speaking residents of the Wah Luck House who want to be able to communicate with their home hospice nurses but cannot understand their medical advice or instructions.

The D.C. Language Access Coalition advocates for the linguistic rights of our fellow community members to fulfill our role in the 2004 D.C. Language Access Act, a local civil rights law that sets national precedents and builds upon Title VI of the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act. Our role is to consult with D.C. government agencies in creating and implementing a plan to provide the necessary services to ELLs who live and work in Washington, D.C. We work on policy and regulatory issues while empowering ELL communities to participate in the civil society in which they live, work, play and contribute.

While we are proud of our accomplishments, we realize everyday that there is still much work to be done. During this holiday season and as we start a new year, show that you share our vision by contributing to and supporting our mission. Please support the D.C. Language Access Coalition by donating to our work. Through your support, we would like to raise at least \$7000 by March 1, 2010.

What can we do with \$7,000?

- With \$7000, we can make sure our Language Access Advocate, Tereguebode Goungou, can spend the next 6 months helping ELL individuals access government agencies and services ranging from Child and Family Protective Services to the Department of Motor Vehicles.
- With \$7000, our Lead Education Organizer, Mauricio Lopez, and our Education Coordinator, Laura Lehman, can work with 7 new public school students who are in ESL classes and build their leadership and professional skills to advocate for improved quality of education in D.C. public schools.
- With \$7000, Patrick Coonan, our Deputy Director and Health Organizer, can work over the next 6 months to ensure that the hospitals and clinics that receive federal and local tax dollars to do their work, are guaranteeing access to quality healthcare to all

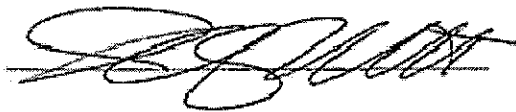
D.C. residents. This will ensure that stories like the pregnant woman bleeding do not result in miscommunication, but in actual services that ensure the health of her unborn child.

- With \$7000, we can present Know Your Rights Trainings to 700 people to continue promoting community awareness and engagement in civil society to execute their rights to freedom and liberty.

If everyone who receives this letter contributes \$35, our goal will be met! Of course, a gift of any amount will be greatly appreciated and well spent, helping us continue to empower community members to advocate for themselves, learn English, and fully integrate into US society. To donate, click [here](#). Please be sure to specify that you are donating to the D.C. Language Access Coalition by writing our name in the "Designation" line.

Thanks for your support this year and remember that your donation is tax-deductible. Look forward to a letter from our fiscal sponsor, the Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center.

To a wonderful year ahead!



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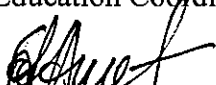
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