

Language Access ~~Act~~  
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Good Afternoon, members of the Budget Oversight Committee. My name is Laura Merryfield, and I represent Building Healthy Communities: Long Beach and the Long Beach Language Access Coalition.

Fiscal Year 2015 was the first budget cycle where the Language Access Policy, passed in 2013, was funded. Our coalition has observed as progress has been made, and we are pleased to see parts of the policy moving forward, such as document translation, a greater recognition of the policy across departments, and the allocation of \$80,000 in additional funds for Fiscal Year 16, an acknowledgement that language access is an ongoing need. And though steps have been made, many members of the Limited English Proficient community continue to wait for a fully implemented, robust policy. Of the \$250,000 allocated last year, \$70,000 remained unspent. As a result, community members have still not received the services they need, and language access is pushed back. We respectfully ask, why were these funds not spent?

and an administrative intern

Additionally, as we also hope to better understand the current state of Language Access in the city to share back to our communities, we would like to know which specific parts of the Language Access Policy that funds from FY15 were used on, and which pieces still require additional funds.

We ask the BOC and the City Council to continue to fund the Language Access Policy, and to prioritize the following first points of contact for LEP residents:

- Public displays and signage
- Phone lines and voicemails
- Front desk staffing in LEP languages

These are critical was in which residents engage with the city, and they make a huge difference in its implementation truly being felt.

Additionally, the Mayor has suggested a single phone line as part of this year's budget. If such a phone line is funded, it is important for it to be language accessible, and we ask that this is considered in all aspects of its budgeting and planning.

We also ask that Language Access in future years is integrated and itemized in every department's budget as an ongoing priority; for instance, the Mayor has directed Parks and Rec and other departments to integrate funding for future years of the Be SAFE youth program- we believe the same can be done with Language Access.

Finally, we ask for the city to schedule Development Services in one of the upcoming budget hearings, so that the issue of Language Access can be further discussed.

Thank you for your time.