

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS  
JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL  
BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE ON  
IMMIGRATION

----- X

November 2, 2022  
Start: 10:10 a.m.  
Recess: 1:40 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room-City Hall

B E F O R E: Sandra Ung,  
Chairperson for Committee on  
Governmental Operations

Julie Menin,  
Chairperson for Committee on Small  
Business

Shahana K. Hanif,  
Chairperson for Committee on  
Immigration

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Gale A. Brewer  
Lincoln Restler  
Lynn C. Schulman  
Marjorie Velázquez  
Brooks-Powers  
Rita Joseph  
Shekar Krishnan

## COUNCIL MEMBERS: (CONT.)

Darlene Mealy  
Tiffany Cabàn  
Julie Won  
Carmen N. De La Rosa  
Francisco Moya  
Pierina Ana Sanchez

## A P P E A R A N C E S

Kevin Kim  
Commissioner for the New York City Department of  
Small Business Services or SBS

Manuel Castro  
Commissioner for the Mayor's Office of Immigrant  
Affairs

Kitty Chan  
SBS Deputy Commissioner for the New York City  
Department of Small Business Services or SBS

Anne Montesano  
Executive Director of Interagency Initiatives and  
Language Access from the Mayor's Office of  
Immigrant Affairs or MOIA

Corinne Schiff  
Deputy Commissioner from the Department of Health  
and Mental Hygiene

Carlos Ortiz  
Assistant Commissioner from the Department of  
Consumer and Worker Protection

John Castelli  
Deputy Commissioner from the Office of  
Administrative Trials and Hearings, OATH

Marisa Senigo  
Deputy Commissioner from the Office of  
Administrative Trials and Hearings, OATH

## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Sheila Actar(SP?)

Member of New York City Chapter of Asian Women's Organization NAPAWF, also known as the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum Sheila Actar

Fatima Mazumdar(SP?)

Member of the National Asian Pacific Americans Women's Forum, NAPAWF

Hashina Sumi

Member of the National Asian Pacific Americans Women's Forum, NAPAWF

Lily Liang

NYC Organizer of NAPAWF, National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum

Zua Tao

Member of National Asian Pacific and American Women's Forum, NAPAWF

Ravi Reddi

Associate Director of Advocacy and Policy at the Asian American Federation

Aracelis Lucero

Executive Director of MASA

Urgen Sherpa

Small Business Organizer at Chhaya Community Development Corporation

## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Tiena Wagnag(SP?)  
Senior Manager of Local Policy and Legislation at  
the New York Immigration Coalition

Jeremy Laufer  
District Manager for Community Board 7

Shaun Campbell  
Community Board 7

Medha Ghosh  
Health Policy Coordinator at CACF, the Coalition  
for Asian American Children and Families

1 COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
2 THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
3 ON IMMIGRATION

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning everyone and  
5 welcome to the Committees on Small Business,  
6 Immigration and Governmental Operations. At this  
7 time, we ask if you could please silent or vibrate  
8 your cellphones. Thank you for your cooperation, we  
9 are ready to begin.

10 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Good morning. I'm Council  
11 Member Sandra Ung, Chair of the Committee on  
12 Governmental Operations. I'm thrilled to be  
13 conducting today's hearing jointly with the  
14 Committees on Immigration and Small Business. I  
15 would like to thank my Co-Chairs Council Member  
16 Shahana Hanif and Julie Menin for all their hard work  
17 in putting this hearing together.

18 I would also like to welcome my colleague who has  
19 joined us, Councilman Lynn Schulman. At today's  
20 hearing, the Committee will review the work of the  
21 Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs in providing  
22 critical language access for our low English  
23 proficiency neighbors and small business community.

24 In addition, the Committee will examine an issue  
25 that's been a very important topic for me for a long  
time. The unique challenges faced by the limited

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 7

English proficient community and accessing government services and information.

New York is a city of immigrants. It is also one of the most linguistically diverse cities in the world. New Yorkers speak over 200 different languages and nearly half of all city residents speak a language other than English at home. Roughly 25 percent or 1.8 million New Yorkers are considered limited English proficient. This should not be a barrier to accessing critical government information or services.

In 2017, the Council passed local law 30, which requires certain city agencies to provide language access service into ten designated city-wide languages. The Governmental Operations and the Committee alongside the Committee of Immigration has already conducted two expansive oversight hearings. The first in 2018, the second in 2020, to ensure the compliance with this law. Today, the Committees want to review the progress that agencies have made since its last oversight hearing in 2020 and identify areas for further improvement.

I understand the city, as linguistically diverse as New York ensuring that every community has the

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 8

1  
2 same access to government information and services is  
3 an immense logistical challenge and I know the  
4 partners in MOIA are committed to improving language  
5 access for everyone. Limited English proficient New  
6 Yorkers should not receive second rate service,  
7 simply because they speak another language. Their  
8 needs are no less important, and they deserve the  
9 same level of access to government services  
10 information as their English-speaking neighbors.

11 I'm happy to say two of the bills being heard by  
12 the Committee today are bills that I introduced and  
13 will improve access to vital information for New  
14 Yorkers with a limited English proficiency. The  
15 first bill, Intro. 697, will require agencies to  
16 provide language access services in several  
17 additional languages.

18 The second bill, Intro. 699, will enhance  
19 language access for small business owners. I'm  
20 hopeful that these bills, along with others being  
21 introduced by several of my colleagues today will  
22 help address some of the issues that limited English  
23 proficient New Yorkers have encountered while dealing  
24 with various city agencies and I look forward to  
25



COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 9

1  
2 discussing them in greater detail with the  
3 administration.

4 And with that, I would like to thank members of  
5 the public and their representatives from the Office  
6 of Immigrant Affairs who have come to testify today.  
7 I also want to thank CJ Murray, Jayasri Ganapathy and  
8 Erica Cohen for the central staff for their work in  
9 putting this hearing together. And finally, I want  
10 to thank my own Chief of Staff Alexander Hart (SP?)  
11 for his assistance.

12 Now, I would like to turn it over to my Co-Chair  
13 Council Member Hanif for her statement.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much Council  
15 Member Ung. Good morning, I'm Council Member Shahana  
16 Hanif, Chair of the Immigration Committee. I would  
17 like to thank everyone joining us for today's  
18 oversight hearing on supporting immigrant small  
19 businesses and promoting language access.

20 I want to thank my Co-Chairs Council Member  
21 Sandra Ung and Council Member Julie Menin for  
22 agreeing to do this joint hearing. We were just  
23 sharing that it is so much more fun when we get to do  
24 this together between Committees. And also, my  
25 Council colleagues, representatives from the

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 10

1 administration and the public for being here and  
2 members of the public participating remotely.  
3

4 Most New Yorkers would agree that small  
5 businesses are the lifeblood of our city. We rely on  
6 them for our everyday purchases and services. In New  
7 York City, nearly half of these small businesses are  
8 owned and operated by immigrants. They are our  
9 friends, neighbors, they are the part of the fabric  
10 of our community but many of these immigrant business  
11 owners and their staff face challenges when it comes  
12 to language access. While they may be most  
13 comfortable using one of the over 200 different  
14 languages spoken in this city, until now, for many  
15 immigrant small business owners, government services  
16 and communications have not been available in their  
17 languages.

18 Language barriers have made it challenging to  
19 communicate with city officials and seamlessly run  
20 small businesses. These barriers have contributed to  
21 miscommunications about permits, fines and overall  
22 compliance with various city regulations.

23 While our hearing today does focus on alleviating  
24 this communication problem for small businesses, it  
25 is also important that we zoom out and find solutions

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 11

1 that improve the lives of our immigrant communities  
2 overall. Improving language access and removing  
3 language barriers are larger overarching goals that  
4 we must focus on to ensure our city is a place where  
5 immigrants to integrate and flourish. Our three  
6 committees are working to remedy these language  
7 access issues with the bills we are hearing today.

9 In the Committee on Immigration specially we are  
10 excited to hear a bill I've introduced, Intro. 570.  
11 This bill would create an office of translation and  
12 interpretation within the Mayor's Office of  
13 Immigration of Affairs. This office would provide  
14 translations and interpretations in the designated  
15 citywide languages and identify these services for  
16 languages that are not one of the designated citywide  
17 languages.

18 Currently, our city agencies outsource most of  
19 their language services to out of state contractors  
20 who produce subpar work at high costs. As a result,  
21 many agencies have struggled to comply with local law  
22 30, which requires vote for documents to be  
23 translated in the city's ten most spoken languages  
24 and the provision of interpretation services when  
25 needed.

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 12

1  
2       During the pandemic, these struggles were all too  
3 clear as the city was often unable to communicate  
4 essential and time sensitive information to our  
5 immigrant communities regarding the vaccine safety  
6 protocols and changing policies. By building out our  
7 in-house language service infrastructure, we can  
8 better ensure compliance with local law 30, improve  
9 the quality of services and launch a pipeline for  
10 high quality city jobs for New Yorkers with language  
11 skills.

12       Additionally, this arrangement would be more cost  
13 effective for the city, as evidence by the  
14 Independent Budget Offices analysis on the issue  
15 initiated by Council Member Brewer.

16       I also want to highlight that just last month,  
17 the state launched a parallel office of language  
18 access that will be tasked with completing  
19 translation work for state agencies. The city can  
20 and should follow suit here through the passage of  
21 this bill.

22       I want to be clear that while we need to  
23 strengthen our centralized services, we must also  
24 champion and resource our community-based language  
25 service providers in order to build a true language

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 13

1  
2 justice ecosystem in New York City. There is no one  
3 silver bullet solution to this issue and it's  
4 important that we take a multifaceted approach here.  
5 Smooth communication is a vital step to changing the  
6 lives of immigrant New Yorkers and the bills that are  
7 part of today's hearing will help us improve  
8 communications between immigrant communities and our  
9 city. It is my ardent hope that the bills we are  
10 hearing today will further shader language barriers  
11 in this city.

12 To that end, I am eager to hear the  
13 administration and public feedback on the proposed  
14 legislation. I want to thank the Committee staff for  
15 their work on this hearing including both Jayasri  
16 Ganapathy and CJ Murray, Senior Committee Counsel  
17 Erica Cohen, Policy Analyst and Florentine  
18 Cabaret(SP?) Finance Analyst. I also would like to  
19 thank my Chief of Staff Nora Brickner, Legislative  
20 Director Alex Liao and everyone working in the  
21 background to make this important hearing run  
22 smoothly.

23 We will now turn to our Co-Chair Council Member  
24 Menin for an opening statement. Thank you.

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 14

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you so much. Before I  
3 begin, I just want to note, we've been joined by our  
4 colleagues Council Member Gale Brewer, Council Member  
5 Marjorie Valàzquez. So, good morning and welcome to  
6 today's joint hearing, examining how the city can  
7 prevent language access issues from continuing to  
8 unfairly impact our small businesses.

9 I'm Julie Menin, Chair of the Council's Small  
10 Business Committee and I'm so pleased to be doing  
11 this joint hearing along with my colleagues Chair Ung  
12 and Chair Hanif, do discuss this critical deficiency  
13 in government services and engagement with the public  
14 that continues to plague our small business owners.  
15 Understanding your rights and responsibilities as a  
16 small business owner, knowing about various  
17 government funding streams that might be available to  
18 you, ensuring you take the appropriate steps to  
19 engage with inspectors and to address notices of  
20 violations when they are issued, all are necessary to  
21 running a business of any size in our city.

22 The layers and myriad rules and regulations can  
23 be incredibly difficult to keep up for our mom-and-  
24 pop shops across the city. It is in the city's  
25 interest to communicate effectively and to make

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 15

1  
2 themselves responsive to small business owners who  
3 obviously want to comply and who also make sure that  
4 they have the tools to thrive.

5       Although the city has taken steps to ensure that  
6 agencies providing services to New Yorkers, including  
7 those that they inspect and regulate, do so with  
8 language access tools and cultural competency in  
9 mind. There is honestly great room for improvement,  
10 which is why of course we're having this hearing  
11 today.

12       Small business owners who are less than  
13 proficient in English have continued to share their  
14 struggles with us when interacting with inspectors  
15 and regulatory agencies, despite their complete  
16 willingness to comply with the law. The package of  
17 bills we're hearing today can help us to do better.

18       Two bills will be heard today in the Small  
19 Business Committee. The first, which is sponsored by  
20 myself Intro. 685, would establish an Office of small  
21 business digitalization. This office would promote  
22 digitalization of small businesses through website  
23 design assistance and online marketing and provide  
24 culturally responsive technological assistance to  
25 small business owners.

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 16

1  
2       Additionally, this office would conduct outreach  
3 about digitalization in the designated citywide  
4 languages and access city programs and policies  
5 related to small business digitalization.

6       The second bill Intro. 699, as sponsored by  
7 Council Member Ung would strengthen existing  
8 protections for limited English proficient business  
9 owners, including clarifying the information provided  
10 in the business owners bill of rights and food  
11 service establishment code of conduct. And it would  
12 also require SBS to work with agencies to increase  
13 the number of bilingual and multilingual inspectors.

14       The bill would also require the city to provide  
15 written translations of final oath decisions to  
16 business owners.

17       I very much look forward to hearing testimony  
18 today from the administration and from small business  
19 owners and advocates on this package of bills today.  
20 I now want to turn it to Council Member Gale Brewer  
21 to provide an opening statement on her bill.

22       COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much  
23 Council Member Menin, Hanif and Ung and I'm going to  
24 be talking about Intro. 382. This bill would allow  
25 business owners to choose their preferred language



COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 17

1  
2 for written communications, particularly from the  
3 Department of consumer and worker protection and the  
4 Department of Health and Mental Health.

5 I think we all know but certainly the Department  
6 of City Planning knows that one half of all New  
7 Yorkers, 3.8 million speak a language other than  
8 English. 25 percent, 1.8 million people are not  
9 English proficient, particularly many of whom are  
10 older and running businesses and I think the  
11 Department of Small Business Services knows and  
12 because they tell us that 47 percent of small  
13 business owners are foreign born and all you have to  
14 do is walk around our great communities to know that.

15 It's hard enough to run a business. I know we're  
16 all trying to have one stop. I might be dead before  
17 we get one stop but maybe we'll get it, just to let  
18 you know. But business owners are trying to come  
19 back from the pandemic and one way is to make sure  
20 that the language is appropriate. Because that will  
21 ease a major hurdle for business owners.

22 Important city matters like a violation, or an  
23 inspection result can be very challenging, but they  
24 won't necessarily linger in a mailbox or on a  
25 cellphone because a small business owner will be able

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 18

1  
2 to translate. They don't necessarily have the money  
3 to hire an interpreter to translate an important  
4 document and what we don't want because it does  
5 happen is taking kids out of school to do  
6 translation. I've seen that a million times.

7       So, offering choice of languages provides more  
8 options for business owners and better ways for the  
9 city to communicate. And obviously removing language  
10 barriers allows owners of businesses the opportunity  
11 to focus on their business, their staff and their  
12 customers.

13       I want to thank everyone because I do remember  
14 with John Lou when I was in the Council before, we  
15 started the first language bill. We passed it at the  
16 human service agencies in the City of New York and  
17 it's really important to make sure that the language  
18 issues are addressed in the private sector. Thank  
19 you very much.

20       CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you and I also want to  
21 note, we've been joined by Majority Whip Selvena  
22 Brooks-Powers. And now, I'm going to turn it over to  
23 CJ. Thank you.

24       COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. We will now  
25 hear testimony from the administration. Before we

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 19

1  
2 begin, I will administer the affirmation to all  
3 members of the administration who are currently at  
4 the panelist table. Please raise your hand. I will  
5 read the affirmation once and then call on each of  
6 you individually to respond.

7 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth  
8 and nothing but the truth before this Committee and  
9 to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

10 Commissioner Kevin Kim?

11 KEVIN KIM: I do.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Commissioner Manuel Castro?

13 MANUEL CASTRO: I do.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner Kitty  
15 Chan.

16 KITTY CHAN: I do.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Executive Director Anne  
18 Montesano?

19 ANNE MONTESANO: I do.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may begin.

21 KEVIN KIM: Sorry, I missed that. Good morning  
22 Chairs Ung, Menin and Hanif and members of the  
23 respective Committees on Governmental Operations,  
24 Small Business and Immigration. My name is Kevin  
25 Kim. I am the Commissioner for the New York City

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 20

1  
2 Department of Small Business Services or SBS. I am  
3 joined today by SBS Deputy Commissioner Kitty Chan to  
4 my right. Commissioner Manuel Castro to my left and  
5 Executive Director of Interagency Initiatives and  
6 Language Access Anne Montesano from the Mayor's  
7 Office of Immigrant Affairs or MOIA, as well on this  
8 table. We also have Deputy Commissioner Corinne  
9 Schiff from the Department of Health and Mental  
10 Hygiene. We have Assistant Commissioner Carlos Ortiz  
11 from the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection  
12 and Deputy Commissioners John Castelli and Marisa  
13 Senigo from the Office of Administrative Trials and  
14 Hearings or OATH.

15 We are pleased to testify today on the city's  
16 commitment to supporting immigrant small businesses.  
17 At SBS, through the work of our four divisions, we  
18 aim to unlock economic potential and create economic  
19 security for all New Yorkers by connecting them to  
20 good jobs, creating stronger businesses and building  
21 vibrant neighborhoods across the five boroughs.

22 Our division of economic and financial  
23 opportunity helps the city's MWBEs connect to  
24 government contracting opportunities. Our division  
25 of business services helps businesses of every size

and sector start, operate and grow in New York City,  
including through government navigation support.

Our neighborhood development division equips  
community-based partners including the city's 76 BIDs  
with resources to help our commercial corridors  
thrive and our workforce development division works  
to increase access to quality training and jobs for  
all New Yorkers.

From day one, Mayor Adams has put equity at the  
center of our economic recovery strategy. It is at  
the heart of our mission and work at SBS. The  
Mayor's Rebuild, Renew, Reinvent Blueprint for  
Economy Recovery, released in March, sets forth 70  
initiatives to supercharge our economic comeback,  
with a meaningful focus on small businesses  
particularly those led by BIPOC and immigrant  
entrepreneurs.

We have already made great progress. New York  
City's private sector has added nearly 160,000 jobs  
since December '21. We have regained nearly 820,000  
of the 946,000 private sector jobs lost during the  
height of the pandemic. New shops and restaurants  
emerge every day in the place of vacant spaces. EDC  
estimates that in Q1 of 2022, approximately 11,850

1  
2 new businesses were started in the city. An  
3 acceleration over previous quarters. Tourism and  
4 retail spending are also returning to pre-pandemic  
5 levels and nightlife is surging.

6 Over my nine months as Commissioner, I have met  
7 with hundreds of small business owners in dozens of  
8 neighborhoods across the five boroughs, from  
9 Kensington in Brooklyn to Downtown Flushing in Queens  
10 to Wakefield in the Bronx, small business owners  
11 share their stories of perseverance in the face of  
12 great challenges, as well as their optimism for the  
13 future.

14 This is not an accident. The city with  
15 unprecedented interagency coordination is mobilizing  
16 to forge a full and inclusive economic recovery  
17 centered on the growth of our small businesses, many  
18 of which are immigrant owned. In fact, nearly half  
19 of New York City small businesses are immigrant  
20 owned. These business employ approximately half a  
21 million New Yorkers and contribute billions in  
22 economic activity. Through Mayor Adams Executive  
23 Order Two, the city already identified an  
24 unprecedented 118 reforms to regulations that unduly  
25 burden small businesses. The reforms include the

1  
2 proposed repeal of 30 provisions of the city's laws  
3 and rules. The reduction of civil penalties  
4 associated with 49 provisions and amendments to 39  
5 provisions to include a first-time warning or cure  
6 period or an extension of an existing cure period.

7 This effort alone will put millions of dollars  
8 back into the hands of small businesses each year.  
9 And that's just a start. Since then, SBS has  
10 launched our New York City Business Express Service  
11 Team or NYC BEST, dedicated to streamlining business  
12 interactions with government. This program provides  
13 small business owners with one-on-one assistance,  
14 navigating the web of NYC's regulatory agencies.  
15 Many of which are similarly updating their processes  
16 to put small businesses first.

17 At the same time, we are working closely with the  
18 Office of Technology and Innovation to overall the  
19 New York City Business Portal to develop a modern  
20 platform that leads small businesses through seamless  
21 city government interactions. Including filing  
22 permits, inspections and fees and fine payments.

23 I want to thank Chair Julie Menin and the Council  
24 for your support of this initiative with the recently  
25 signed Local Law 94 of 2022. Thank you Chair Menin.

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 24

1  
2 Through these efforts, we're not just working for  
3 immigrant small businesses, we're working alongside  
4 them. Last month, we launched our Small Business  
5 Advisory Commission, comprised of a diverse group of  
6 small business owners and community-based  
7 organizations that will advise the Mayor on matters  
8 impacting small business owners now and in the  
9 future.

10 This Commission truly represents the diversity of  
11 our small business community by borough, by size,  
12 years of operation, and industry. It includes many  
13 immigrant business owners and associations  
14 representing immigrant communities from the National  
15 Supermarkets Association to the New York Laundromat  
16 Business Association, to the Street Vendors Project.  
17 Together, we will continue the work of EOT to cut red  
18 tape, improve business services and programming and  
19 promote an equitable, broad-based recovery.

20 We also know that strengthening our commercial  
21 corridors in neighborhoods hit hardest by the  
22 pandemic, including immigrant communities is an  
23 important tool to speed up economic recovery. At  
24 SBS, we have made critical investments to revitalize  
25 the hardest hit neighborhoods by awarding \$800,000 in



COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 25

1 first ever grants to bolster the formation of new  
2  
3 BIDs. These grants will go to early-stage BID  
4 exploration, organizing and planning, as well as  
5 late-stage BID formation in communities such as  
6 Washington Heights in Manhattan and Mott Haven in the  
7 Bronx.

8 Three weeks ago, SBS launched a first of its kind  
9 program to support smaller BIDs as well. Many of  
10 which are located in low to moderate income and  
11 immigrant communities, with over \$3 million in grant  
12 funding. I want to again thank Chair Julie Menin for  
13 her advocacy and support of these programs. By  
14 supporting the creation of new BIDs and giving a  
15 boost to small BIDs, the city is investing in the  
16 quality of life and business traffic in these areas  
17 for years to come.

18 Many immigrant small businesses are also  
19 certified MWBEs and at SBS, we are using every tool  
20 in the box to create and expand economic  
21 opportunities for these businesses. For example,  
22 Governor Hochul last month signed a groundbreaking  
23 law doubling the size of contracts city agencies can  
24 award to MWBEs during accelerated process. This  
25 legislation, which the city pushed aggressively for,

1  
2 will make it easier than ever for city agencies to  
3 work with MWBEs.

4 In September, SBS hosted the first in-person  
5 citywide procurement fair since the pandemic, with  
6 over 700 businesses in attendance, marking the city's  
7 30<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the MWBE program. We also  
8 announced that this year, the city will surpass its  
9 one NYC goals of committing \$25 billion to MWBEs  
10 three years ahead of schedule. In total, city  
11 agencies and authorities awarded \$6.5 billion in  
12 contracts for MWBEs in Fiscal Year '22, a more than  
13 55 percent increase from Fiscal Year '21. In  
14 addition, over 1,600 individual MWBEs were awarded a  
15 city contract last year. Up 13 percent from Fiscal  
16 Year '21.

17 Meanwhile SBS continues to prioritize language  
18 access across all our free programming. Over the  
19 course of the pandemic, we translated more than 70  
20 critical documents in up to 17 languages each. We  
21 also launched the SBS hotline, 1-888-SBS-4NYC, which  
22 in Fiscal Year '21 and Fiscal Year '22, served over  
23 1,100 calls in languages other than English.

24 We partnered with MOIA on webinars to ensure we  
25 were reaching a diverse group of immigrant

1 communities. We also engage closely with community  
2 partners with deep ties to immigrant communities.  
3 For example, our popular Commercial Lease Assistance  
4 Program works with ten community-based organizations  
5 to ensure diverse communities are aware of our  
6 services.  
7

8 In addition, our Capital Access Unit, which helps  
9 businesses connect to financing opportunities, grow  
10 by connecting them to capital programs. Works  
11 closely with more than a dozen community development  
12 financial institutions or CDFIs with experience  
13 lending to immigrant communities. Our compliance  
14 advisor experts are out in the field every day,  
15 working with small businesses to adhere to city rules  
16 and regulations, so they are not penalized in an  
17 inspection.

18 The provide free onsite consultations in language  
19 in Spanish, Haitian Creole, Russian, three dialects  
20 of Chinese and Korean. We know that proactive  
21 outreach to historically underserved communities is  
22 paramount and that's why since January 2022, SBSs  
23 community outreach team has reached more than 6,000  
24 businesses directly in their neighborhoods, meeting  
25 them where they are. We have focused outreach to

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 28

1  
2 immigrant and ethnic minority communities, including  
3 the Yemeni community, Dominican community and the  
4 Bangladeshi community to name a few.

5 Through small business roundtables to corridor  
6 tours with our elected leader partners, to organizing  
7 interagency resource fairs across all five boroughs  
8 over five days during National Small Business Week,  
9 we reached new businesses and brought our services  
10 into communities that were not as well aware of SBS  
11 previously. It has been truly gratifying to hear  
12 from communities their appreciation for the  
13 administration to bring these services to their  
14 neighborhoods for the first time.

15 Lastly, to deepen our connection with large  
16 immigrant communities, SBS formed the Asian American  
17 Small Business Taskforce last year with more than 40  
18 partnering organizations that serve the Asian  
19 business community, and we are in the process of  
20 launching a Latino American Small Business Taskforce.  
21 These taskforce bring immigrant communities to the  
22 table on a regular basis, so we can co-develop  
23 strategies to address the unique challenges they  
24 face.

1  
2       These are just some of the services that we  
3 provide businesses. Including immigrant owned small  
4 businesses to help them launch, grow and thrive. I  
5 would like to now turn to the proposed legislation  
6 that directly impacts SBS, Introduction 685 and 699.  
7 Intro. 685 would establish an office of small  
8 business digitalization to coordinate and facilitate  
9 the digitalization of small businesses in New York  
10 City.

11       At SBS, we know that businesses that had digital  
12 capacity for online sales and marketing weathered the  
13 pandemic better than those that did not. But not all  
14 businesses have the resources to make that digital  
15 transition, therefore SBS offers a free six module  
16 digital marketing series with classes in digital  
17 marketing, website creation and search engine  
18 optimization.

19       Additionally, SBS co-developed a 15-hour course  
20 with SUNY Buffalo and FIT to help businesses launch  
21 online. Our Women Entrepreneurs NYC Initiative  
22 connects women entrepreneurs with women mentors who  
23 teach classes on helping businesses go digital. And  
24 these mentors are for one-on-one support on WE NYC to  
25 WE NYC enrollees. Several of our BIDs have also

1  
2 determined that digitalization is a priority in their  
3 corridors and have used SBS funds to support  
4 businesses to get online.

5 In whole, we support Intro. 685's intention to  
6 support businesses to transition online and we will  
7 continue to provide resources for small businesses to  
8 do this.

9 Turning to Intro. 699. Intro. 699 sets forth  
10 many important initiatives related to language  
11 access. SBS supports efforts to ensure business  
12 owners receive information that help them better  
13 understand and comply with rules and regulations.  
14 And thus, preserve public health and safety, while at  
15 the same time avoiding fines and violations.

16 We want all businesses to operate successfully  
17 and in compliance and our sister agencies encourage  
18 bi- and multilingual applicants for city agency  
19 inspector positions and the use of language line to  
20 facilitate communication whenever beneficial.

21 Section four of this bill would require SBS to  
22 coordinate with our partner regulatory agencies to  
23 increase the number of bilingual inspectors. SBS  
24 does not have jurisdiction over other agencies  
25 practices, thus SBS would be ill-equipped to

1  
2 implement this requirement, which may also implicate  
3 budgets, job duties and hiring practices across the  
4 city.

5       Additionally, SBS and our colleagues at OATH are  
6 supportive of this bills proposal regarding  
7 translation of final OATH decisions. However, we  
8 want to clarify that this would pertain to decisions  
9 issued after a hearing where OATH has reason to know  
10 of a language preference. OATH would have no way of  
11 knowing what language to send a default decision for  
12 failure to appear. My colleagues from OATH can  
13 answer any follow-up questions you may have on that.

14       Thank you for this opportunity to talk about SBSs  
15 work with immigrant small businesses. I look forward  
16 to your continued partnership on this important work.  
17 I now turn it over to my colleague Commissioner  
18 Castro from MOIA to address the city's broader  
19 language access strategies. Thank you.

20       MANUEL CASTRO: Thank you Commissioner Kim and  
21 Buenos Dias. Good morning Chair Ung, Chair Hanif and  
22 Chair Menin, and thank you to all the members of the  
23 Governmental Operations, Immigration, and Small  
24 Business Committee for holding this hearing and the  
25

1  
2 opportunity to testify on such an important issue for  
3 me.

4 I am Commissioner Manuel Castro of the Mayor's  
5 Office of Immigrant Affairs, and I am joined by my  
6 colleague Anne Montesano, Executive Director of  
7 Interagency Initiatives and Language Access, to my  
8 left.

9 There is no place like New York City. There is  
10 just no place comparable on earth that comes close to  
11 our city's demographic diversity. And this is true  
12 for the immigrant entrepreneurs that come from around  
13 the world to pursue their American dream in our city.

14 In fact, we can say immigrants are the heart of  
15 our local economy, as they own nearly half of New  
16 York City's businesses and contribute more than \$195  
17 billion to the city's gross domestic product.

18 First, I'd like to speak to language diversity in  
19 New York City. In MOIAs role in advancing language  
20 access. The demographic diversity of entrepreneurs  
21 also reflect the diversity in the languages they  
22 speak. More than 200 languages are spoken by  
23 residents from the five boroughs. The top 12  
24 language spoken by immigrant New Yorkers are Spanish  
25 with 39.4 percent, Chinese including Cantonese and



1  
2 Mandarin at 16.1 percent, Russian at 6.9 percent,  
3 Bengali at 4.1 percent, Haitian at 31.1 percent,  
4 French at 2.6 percent, Arabic at 2.4 percent, Korean  
5 at 1.1 percent, Polish at 1.8 percent, Italian at 1.5  
6 percent, Urdu at 15 percent. I'm sorry, 1.5 percent  
7 and Tagalog at 1.1 percent.

8       Language access is essential to advancing equity  
9 for immigrant New Yorkers, including small business  
10 owners. Given the linguistic diversity within New  
11 York City and the number of New Yorkers who have  
12 Limited English Proficiency, also known as LEPs,  
13 about two million.

14       MOIAs role in advancing language access is a  
15 critical one. MOIA is tasked with overseeing the  
16 ongoing implementation of Local Law 30 of 2017, that  
17 requires the city to provide language services for  
18 New Yorkers with LEP. We help build the capacity of  
19 city agencies, many of whom are here today, to  
20 effectively communicate to New Yorkers with LEP by  
21 advising and providing technical assistance to  
22 agencies.

23       We hold interagency convenings to share best  
24 practices and we work with agencies to help them  
25 address language access challenges. We also provide

1 translation and interpretation services to MOIA,  
2 mayoral offices, and City Hall and are thrilled to  
3 now be growing our team by hiring language access  
4 specialists in the ten Local Law 30 language, also  
5 known as the designated citywide languages.  
6

7 With respect to the city's commitment to  
8 immigrant small businesses, having led a nonprofit  
9 organization at the heart of Jackson Heights Queens,  
10 one of the most linguistically diverse neighborhoods  
11 in the city or really the country, I know the  
12 importance of our immigrant owned small businesses.  
13 And when I became Commissioner, I was proud to see  
14 this administration share a commitment to supporting  
15 small businesses, entrepreneurship and a more  
16 equitable economy. And I am proud to serve as  
17 Commissioner alongside with Kevin Kim, who you just  
18 heard from.

19 Now, I want to highlight some of the ways in  
20 which MOIA has worked with SBS over the years to  
21 serve immigrant owned businesses. During COVID, MOIA  
22 supported efforts by SBS to ensure business owners  
23 receive information in the languages they speak, by  
24 co-organizing dozens of in-language virtual forums  
25 with SBS and promoting them to immigrant communities.

1  
2 MOIA connected small business owners with the  
3 resources needed to safely reopen, provide outdoor  
4 serves, ensure worker safety and rights, and navigate  
5 eligibility and applications for grants and loans.  
6 Including the Paycheck Protection Program and the  
7 Economic Injury Disaster Loan.

8 MOIA also provided rapid translation of COVID  
9 emergency response communications, information on  
10 business loans and business restart and other  
11 critical resources as the economy reopened.

12 Over the past few months, I visited immigrant  
13 owned businesses across the city as part of my  
14 listening tour of immigrant communities to listen to  
15 their concerns, their challenges and also  
16 aspirations. Most recently, I visited and spoke to a  
17 small business in Staten Island. A Sri Lankan owned  
18 restaurant who opened its own museum to celebrate  
19 their heritage and community in the island.

20 We've also made our way to Brooklyn to visit  
21 Armando, who runs a small mechanic shop and who has  
22 taken advantage of many of the resources provided by  
23 the city and community-led organizations as support  
24 again.

1  
2 Commissioner Kim and I also visited Haven Café, a  
3 cornerstone business in China Town that works to  
4 employ New Yorkers or young New Yorkers with autism.  
5 Demonstrating the social impact of our local small  
6 business ran and operated by immigrant families.

7 Finally, we both had the honor to share our  
8 experience and help launch the new space for  
9 [INAUDIBLE 37:29] Mexicana, also known as a Mexican  
10 coalition. A Mexican community-based organization in  
11 the South Bronx dedicated to helping immigrant  
12 entrepreneurs. Though through these experiences and  
13 others, we have seen first hand how immigrant owners  
14 of businesses are not only the backbone of our  
15 economy, but also pillars of their communities and of  
16 the broader immigrant community.

17 Now, I'll turn to speak to some of the language  
18 access bills considered today. We are thankful for  
19 the partnership with the Council to make our city  
20 accessible to immigrant New Yorkers and entrepreneurs  
21 with limited English proficiency. We are interested  
22 in working with Council to craft legislation that  
23 continues to advance language access and we look  
24 forward to furthering discussions on all of these  
25 bills proposed. Regarding Intro. 570, sponsored by

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 37

1 Council Member Hanif, this bill would create an  
2 office of translation and interpretation services.  
3 MOIA currently has a language services team that  
4 provides services to MOIA, mayoral offices and City  
5 Hall. And we are thrilled that it is growing. We  
6 will be hiring language access specialists in the top  
7 ten local language, 30 languages – sorry, in the ten  
8 Local Law 30 languages who will serve as in-house  
9 translators, expanding our capacity significantly.

11 Currently, agencies provide their own language  
12 services. While the delivery of language services is  
13 decentralized, given the agencies manage their own  
14 language services contracts and some agencies have  
15 small teams of in-house translators. MOIA still  
16 plays an important central and coordinating role in  
17 terms of sharing best practices. Including working  
18 with language service partners and advising agencies.

19 We would like to discuss the bill further with  
20 you and your colleagues to better understand the  
21 intent of the bill. For example, expanding the  
22 scopes of MOIAs language services team to serve all  
23 agencies, would require significant and extensive  
24 resources and further analysis would be needed to  
25

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 38

determine how to best serve various agencies with  
their very different needs.

Regarding Intro. 697, sponsored by Council Member  
Ung. The bill would add to the concept of special  
languages to the language access law. We look  
forward to working with you to better understand the  
bill and the criteria listed in the legislation. And  
regarding Intro. 137, sponsored by Council Member  
Julie Won, this bill relates to the translation and  
distribution of certain emergency information  
documents. We welcome the opportunity to think  
through ways the city can more effectively reach  
immigrant communities with critical information about  
emergencies.

Currently NYSIM provides emergency notification  
in 14 languages plus sign language. The wireless  
emergency alert system however is operated by the  
federal government. We look forward to working with  
you on improving outreach during these critical  
emergencies.

Regarding Intro. 382, sponsored by Council Member  
Gale Brewer and Intro. 700 sponsored by Council  
Member Julie Won. These bills concern translation of  
important in compliance documents. We support

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 39

1  
2 efforts to help business owners be able to understand  
3 agency enforcement related communications. We  
4 believe this is of critical importance for our  
5 immigrant entrepreneurs. However, there are  
6 questions about the intended scope of these bills.  
7 Both in terms of the languages meant to be covered  
8 and the types of documents and materials meant to be  
9 translated. We look forward to working with you and  
10 making official city documents more easily accessible  
11 to all immigrants and immigrant business owners.

12 Finally, I want to sincerely thank you for your  
13 commitment to language access and immigrant small  
14 business owners. And welcome the opportunity to  
15 collaborate on all these bills and into the future  
16 and moving language justice forward in New York City.

17 Many of our staff grew up as children of  
18 immigrants and were ourselves limited English  
19 proficient, so we know firsthand the challenges that  
20 New Yorkers face because of language access issues.

21 And so, with that, I thank you again and I'm open  
22 to any questions.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Before we turn to  
24 Council Member questions, the Sergeants are just  
25 going to need to adjust this table up here, so it can

1  
2 be seen on the camera. So, we'll pause for just a  
3 moment while they do that and then continue.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: In the meantime, I just want  
5 to recognize we've been joined by Council Member  
6 Darlene Mealy. And we've also been joined by Council  
7 Member Rita Joseph and Council Member Shekar  
8 Krishnan. Thank you. I was looking this way and not  
9 that way, sorry, hello.

10 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you Commissioner Kim and  
11 Castro for your testimony today. I just have a  
12 couple questions. First, how does the city agencies  
13 utilize multilingual staff to assist with inspections  
14 and enforcement actions?

15 KEVEN KIM: Could you just repeat the last part  
16 of it?

17 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Sure, how does the city  
18 agencies use multilingual staff to assist with  
19 inspections and enforcement?

20 KEVIN KIM: So, let me first start with just  
21 talking about what SBS does with our small business  
22 compliance advisors. So, we have a dedicated team  
23 that goes out to the field every day. A small  
24 business owner can call us, schedule a free  
25



1  
2 appointment. These are former inspectors of other  
3 sister agencies.

4 And so, for example, if a restaurant owner wanted  
5 to do a preview walkthrough in language, our staff  
6 provides ability to do it in six different language  
7 in person. They'll be able to go there and walk  
8 around the restaurant and point out potential  
9 violations and how to come into compliance with them.  
10 So, we work a lot on the education and prevention  
11 side. And then I can let the other agency speak  
12 about the particular question about their inspection  
13 practices. We can start with DOHMH if you want.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And before you begin, I'll  
15 just swear you in. Do you affirm to tell the truth,  
16 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before  
17 this Committee and to respond honestly to Council  
18 Member questions?

19 CORINNE SCHIFF: Yes.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

21 CORINNE SCHIFF: Good morning, I'm Corinne  
22 Schiff, I'm the Deputy Commissioner for Environmental  
23 Health at the New York City Health Department and we  
24 have many inspectors at the Health Department who are  
25 bilingual or multilingual and we welcome those

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 42

1  
2 skills. All of our inspectors are trained to assess  
3 language access needs at the start of the infection.  
4 If they speak the language of the person who will be  
5 accompanying them on the inspection, they can use  
6 that language and that's a great way to facilitate  
7 communication but it's important that they are able  
8 to communicate no matter the language. And so, then  
9 they are trained to use language line.

10 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. Just so I follow-up  
11 to that. So, you would have a multilingual uhm,  
12 staff member with you when you are doing inspection?

13 CORINNE SCHIFF: So, if the inspector and the  
14 person at the inspection site. The person at the  
15 business share a language other than English, they  
16 can use that language. If they don't, then they use  
17 language line. So, that there's language access  
18 regardless of the language of the person on the site  
19 and the inspector.

20 CHAIRPERSON UNG: So, understood. So, in terms  
21 of your inspectors and I know you can only speak to  
22 your agency. How many inspectors speak different  
23 languages?  
24  
25

1  
2 CORINNE SCHIFF: Many of our inspectors are  
3 bilingual or multilingual, I don't know the exact  
4 count though.

5 CHAIRPERSON UNG: I'm sorry, most of your  
6 inspectors are?

7 CORINNE SCHIFF: Many but I don't know the  
8 number.

9 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Great and do you know what  
10 language uhm, when you say bilingual?

11 CORINNE SCHIFF: I don't have a list of languages  
12 that our inspectors speak but I know just from  
13 meeting them. I just know that we have our staff can  
14 speak a variety of non-English languages, but I don't  
15 think we have a record of that.

16 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay great. If you have  
17 information you could share with us, I would  
18 appreciate that. So, if the inspector does not speak  
19 the language, then you're going to use the language  
20 line. Could you walk us through how a language line  
21 is being used during inspection?

22 CORINNE SCHIFF: Sure, so our inspectors are  
23 trained to assess language access at the very start  
24 of the inspection. They all carry a card with them  
25 that on the back, has 20 languages other than

1  
2 English. And so, the person that will accompany the  
3 inspector around the inspection can point to one of  
4 those languages to indicate which language is their  
5 preference. If it's not one of these languages, then  
6 we work with language line to determine which  
7 language is appropriate for the inspection and we use  
8 language line all the time.

9 To give you an example, from our Food Safety  
10 Program, which inspects restaurants, we conduct - we  
11 use language line on a typical month, 165 times.

12 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. Thank you for your  
13 answers. I think I'm going to go back to  
14 Commissioner Kim.

15 I do appreciate the testimony about Intro. 669,  
16 that it would be difficult for SBS to coordinate with  
17 the partner agencies to increase the number of  
18 bilingual inspectors. But with that, is there any  
19 thought about how SBS can be helpful in this process  
20 of increasing bilingual inspectors?

21 KEVIN KIM: Absolutely, I think what SBS has is  
22 its community partnerships. We have our BIDs. We  
23 have our everyday staff out in the field. We can  
24 definitely help inform what languages are most in  
25

1  
2 need and we can share that information with our  
3 sister agencies to really support that effort.

4 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. I think the goal of  
5 669, the first part of it is about - I was just  
6 asking these questions, is that often language line  
7 is not the easiest process when you're going through  
8 an inspection, especially when English is not your  
9 first language, and you have a card in front of you.  
10 I guess where you point to the language that you need  
11 and to go through that process on the telephone. So,  
12 any way that SBS can be helpful in this process, I  
13 think that would be great.

14 KEVIN KIM: No, absolutely and like I said, on  
15 staff, we have people in the field that are available  
16 in six of the - I wouldn't say the most used language  
17 but for example, Spanish as Commissioner Castro  
18 pointed out, 39 percent you know need Spanish and we  
19 have multiple Spanish speakers. We have a Bengali  
20 speaker. We have Korean speakers. We have three  
21 dialects of Mandarin. Three dialects of Chinese  
22 speakers as well.

23 So, I think it's interagency coordination. Where  
24 in the process of an inspection, if somebody in those  
25 particular languages don't find language line as

1  
2 effective, that the agency inspectors and the  
3 agencies know they can always reach out to SBS, and  
4 we'll be there to be able to help translate real time  
5 over the phone or over Zoom or whatever means  
6 necessary.

7 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. I actually have  
8 some questions now regarding the OATH process.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the  
10 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth  
11 before this Committee and to respond honestly to  
12 Council Member questions?

13 JOHN CASTELLI: I do.

14 CHAIRPERSON UNG: So, right now, currently, what  
15 are the languages provided at OATH?

16 JOHN CASTELLI: Well, we have translation up to  
17 250 language that we have been using translation  
18 services now, third party translation services,  
19 professional translation services now for more than  
20 15 years and we have approximately 20,000  
21 translations are conducted each year at OATH through  
22 our third-party professional translation service.

23 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. So, it's mainly  
24 through language line?

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 47

1  
2 JOHN CASTELLI: Yes, it's through language line,  
3 yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON UNG: So, is interpretation provided  
5 for telephone hearings, as well as in-person  
6 hearings?

7 JOHN CASTELLI: Yes. Interpretations are  
8 provided for all hearings and it's important that  
9 again, our mission is access to justice and a key  
10 component to that is ensuring that the residents and  
11 small business owners of our city have immediate  
12 access to translation and that's what they get.

13 CHAIRPERSON UNG: And can you just walk through,  
14 walk us through the process of if you're in OATH,  
15 either in-person or on the telephone and you need  
16 interpretation services. How does the process go?

17 JOHN CASTELLI: Well, when a summons is filed  
18 with OATH, that is when it comes into our universe.  
19 So, the small business owner would contact OATH and  
20 our staff would get an indication from the small  
21 business owner if they were not proficient in English  
22 or if they had a preferred language that they wanted  
23 to communicate in. And they would immediately over  
24 the phone or in person, immediately contact through  
25

1 language line contact and get translation immediately  
2 and of course for the hearings.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. So, when a  
5 determination is reached, currently what is the  
6 relevant, when the decision is made, uhm, what  
7 language is that decision in right now?

8 JOHN CASTELLI: Well, the language - the decision  
9 is made - it's rendered in English but again, upon  
10 requests from the respondent, small business owner,  
11 that we can afford that language in up to 250  
12 languages translated through a third-party  
13 translation service.

14 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay, so that has to be  
15 affirmatively asked by the small business owner to be  
16 in a different language?

17 JOHN CASTELLI: They can - yes, they can make  
18 that request and we also, through our help center,  
19 again our help center is, once a - once contact is  
20 made between a small business owner and our help  
21 service - I'm sorry, and OATH through the filing of  
22 the summons and then the subsequent contact is made  
23 by phone by the small business owner. Then our small  
24 business help center is immediately involved. And  
25 they provide, they conduct small business help



1  
2 sessions in the language of preference for the small  
3 business owner.

4 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay, understood and lastly, if  
5 a small business owner would like to appeal the  
6 decision, is that information related to a small  
7 business owner in a language other than English?

8 JOHN CASTELLI: Yes, if the small business owner  
9 wants to submit their appeal in the language of their  
10 preference, it's accepted and we will obviously based  
11 on that, we will - the translation will be done.

12 Again, we do document translation through third party  
13 professional services for up to 250 languages, even  
14 though our forms are translated in ten languages that  
15 are immediately available.

16 So, if again, if it's submitted in the language  
17 of preference by the small business owner, we will  
18 respond. Again, the response is in English but also  
19 can be provided in the language that they've  
20 submitted their document in.

21 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Understood, thank you. Thank  
22 you, thank you for your answers today.

23 JOHN CASTELLI: Thank you Council Member. Thank  
24 you for the great work that you guys all do here.  
25 Thank you.

1 COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
2 THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
3 ON IMMIGRATION 50

4 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. I'm right now good  
5 with my questions. I'm going to turn it over to my  
6 other Chairs for their questions.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much  
8 Commissioner Castro. It's exciting to learn about  
9 MOIA's language access specialists. The intention of  
10 Intro. 570 is to further equip MOIA to be a  
11 centralized hub of specialists to be deployed to  
12 agencies on an as needed basis and ensure quality  
13 control of contractors like language line, as opposed  
14 to being directly responsible for all language  
15 service work across agencies. Unless that might be  
16 needed.

17 So, I just wanted to clarify on that BID. I can  
18 understand the anxiety of holding all language access  
19 needs in one agency being something that is not what  
20 MOIA might be equipped to do. So, with what you're  
21 already doing, we want to make sure they're further  
22 equipped uhm, to efficiently provide functioning  
23 language access services across city agencies.

24 So, this bill would codify and strengthen the  
25 work already underway with the language services  
26 team. So, I'd like to ask, do you support this  
27 legislation and what kind of comes up in terms of

1  
2 what you'd like to see expanded for language access  
3 services within MOIA?

4 MANUEL CASTRO: Well, Chair Hanif, thank you for  
5 clarifying further. I think that's really helpful.  
6 Especially Anne Montesano who is here, takes the lead  
7 on our language access work at MOIA.

8 In discussion with the team, you know trying to  
9 understand the scope of the work and the type of  
10 resources needed is generally what comes up. You  
11 know we're working currently with all agencies as a  
12 you know centralized body of collecting and  
13 supporting agencies in offices execute their plans  
14 and consulting with the agencies and offices on a  
15 one-on-one basis and on a regular basis.

16 So, some of that work is already in place to some  
17 extent. Like I said, I'd like to learn more about  
18 this, and you know how we may be able to make this  
19 happen right, given the resources available.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: How many language access  
21 specialists are in the agency right now?

22 MANUEL CASTRO: Anne, do you want to take that?

23 ANNE MONTESANO: Sure, so this is currently a new  
24 position that we're currently hiring for, and we're  
25 excited that the team is growing in this way.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. So, to date, there  
3 aren't language access specialists at this moment but  
4 you're in the process of hiring a team. How many  
5 specialists are you looking to bring on?

6 ANNE MONTESANO: Uhm, and just to clarify, that  
7 doesn't mean there aren't bilingual staff at the  
8 agency. Just people in this particular role who  
9 would serve as in-house community, you know in-house  
10 translators. Uhm, and what was your follow-up  
11 question? The languages?

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: How many are you looking to  
13 bring on?

14 ANNE MONTESANO: Yup, so we are planning to hire  
15 in each of the ten Local Law 30 languages. That  
16 doesn't mean, however that that's the only languages  
17 that we'll be able to provide services in. We've  
18 been providing services in many languages for many  
19 years to MOIA, mayoral offices and City Hall. And  
20 we've done that with the use of you know language  
21 services providers because given the sheer diversity  
22 of languages in New York City, we need to be able to  
23 work with providers that can provide the vast range  
24 of languages that New Yorkers speak.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, currently as it's set up  
3 in the agency, bilingual staff kind of do the  
4 oversight work. Could you just describe what  
5 bilingual staff role is as opposed to the language  
6 access specialists?

7 ANNE MONTESANO: So, our bilingual staff do many  
8 different things. They are doing multilingual  
9 outreach. They are handling calls on the MOIA  
10 hotline for you know constituent services. And then  
11 we also have a language access team that is this sort  
12 of central coordinating entity, and the language  
13 access team really serves as in-house advisors to  
14 other agencies on Local Law 30 implementation on  
15 language access. As the Commissioner said, sharing  
16 best practices, advising agencies. And that is the  
17 team that's growing and that would house the language  
18 access specialists.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. So, the language  
20 access team right now, how big is that?

21 ANNE MONTESANO: Well, we're growing to you know,  
22 we're hiring these ten language access specialists.  
23 We're planning to hire an additional staff to help  
24 expand the capacity of agencies to provide language  
25 access.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then once the language  
3 access specialists are onboarded and you mentioned  
4 ten, will they continue to work in coordination with  
5 the bilingual staff or are the kind of work scope be  
6 separated?

7 ANNE MONTESANO: Yeah, so the work scope - I mean  
8 of course they'll be coordinating across all of MOIA,  
9 but their job will be to translate materials that  
10 come in from MOIA, mayoral offices, City Hall. We  
11 think it's important to have this in-house team, so  
12 that we can be more responsive to translation  
13 requests. Into the urgent translation requests that  
14 come in. This is you know a huge lesson learned from  
15 COVID. As well as reviewing materials but also, you  
16 know highlighting best practices and sharing out  
17 those practices with other agencies.

18 And so, being this again, these in-house advisors  
19 to really uhm, uh, ensure that agencies have the  
20 resources they need and are sharing best practices  
21 with agencies.

22 MANUEL CASTRO: Just to clarify a bit. The role  
23 of the language access team at MOIA has traditionally  
24 served that of providing technical assistance and  
25 support to other offices and agencies. And one of

1  
2 the first things I wanted to do as Commissioner is to  
3 request resources to be able to hire a team of  
4 language access specialists from each of the top ten  
5 languages to start with, that will serve as not just  
6 you know staff translating documents but also our in-  
7 house advisors for each of the top ten languages,  
8 which was not in place. That could bring cultural  
9 competency in other aspects to the work, that I think  
10 it's critical.

11 Also, as staff that will be able to identify any  
12 gaps and issues that might exist and step into  
13 quickly respond to them. As you know, sometimes we,  
14 you know we are the ones that are here first from  
15 Council Members or from community organizations when  
16 there is a lack of language access in a particular  
17 area or translative materials in a particular area  
18 and we are the ones that would step in and respond.

19 And so, this is why I wanted to build out this  
20 team and again, we're starting at ten. That's the  
21 top ten languages. My hope is to continue to add  
22 staff, especially in those limited diffusion  
23 languages that I think are also as critical.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's really wonderful to  
3 hear. What is the budget allocated for the ten  
4 language access specialists?

5 MANUEL CASTRO: For our language access team,  
6 we're at 1.4 for FY23. That will grow progressively  
7 in 2024-2025.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then as you bring on  
9 these specialists, is there training or curriculum  
10 already developed by MOIA in order to really onboard  
11 them in a seamless way? Could you speak more to what  
12 you've been doing with the bilingual staff and what  
13 are the tools that are going to be used to make sure  
14 that there's an equipped, beefed-up team to provide  
15 the work that you're looking to do?

16 MANUEL CASTRO: Well, if you don't mind, I'd like  
17 to use this as a recruitment opportunity.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Absolutely.

19 MANUEL CASTRO: I think if Council Members or  
20 their team know of people who are enthusiastic about  
21 language access and are looking for a role that will  
22 be very exciting to be in, you know these roles I  
23 think are going to be really, really important in our  
24 agency and in our work moving forward.



1  
2 And part of what we like to do with all of our  
3 language access specialists is train them in all the  
4 tools and intricacies of being language access  
5 specialists and more – I mean, there’s just quite a  
6 lot. We just had a really great presentation by our  
7 language access team to the entire staff at MOIA.  
8 They presented on you know the differences between  
9 translation work and interpretation work for  
10 instances. And the developments over the past few  
11 years in those two let’s say professions, which  
12 include the use of technology. The use of for a  
13 number of different strategies through COVID to  
14 amplify the work.

15 So, for instance there’s advances in video  
16 teleconferencing technology that has been able to  
17 really improve the service that providers are able to  
18 have access to for interpretation. Especially you  
19 know because in COVID, so much was done remotely.  
20 And sort of in healthcare for instance that has  
21 improved significantly.

22 So, that’s the kind of training that people will  
23 get, and you know the kind of work that they will be  
24 able to do citywide as they advise and support other  
25 agencies and offices.

1  
2 ANNE MONTESANO: And just to add to what the  
3 Commissioner said, you know part of the work of the  
4 office is to stay a breast of the new technologies  
5 and the technologies that are utilized in the  
6 language services industry, which can be helpful in  
7 providing more consistent and accurate translation.

8 So, one example of that is Computer Assisted  
9 Translation tools, CAT tools. And so, our office  
10 started utilizing those a few years ago and that  
11 helps us provide translations. We also piloted  
12 working with a technology vendor called smart ling  
13 which allows us to provide our website in the ten  
14 Local Law 30 languages human translated. So, not  
15 utilizing Google translate but utilizing professional  
16 translators to ensure accuracy.

17 And those are examples of technologies that we've  
18 uhm, you know piloted and utilized that we then you  
19 know inform other agencies about and share those  
20 practices with other agencies.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, this is all really  
22 helpful to know, and I really commend the agency for  
23 seeing language access as a qualified good paid job  
24 opportunity in a city like ours. Language access  
25

1 should not be free. It should not be on a voluntary  
2 basis.  
3

4 And so, I think you're really setting a tone  
5 here, a really important tone here that language -  
6 this is what language justice is. That we are  
7 utilizing the talent and skills from our communities  
8 to be able to provide these services directly and the  
9 training component is also critical. Because we were  
10 just translating in my office our fall news letter  
11 and in English, we're able to poke a little fun  
12 around some of the sanitation work that we've done  
13 and used trash related puns, which don't translate  
14 into Bangla, which is the language that we're  
15 translating in. And needing to really read the  
16 context and understand the colloquial nature of each  
17 language really requires humans to read through the  
18 translation and then to offer feedback.

19 So, I'm happy to hear about both ends and then  
20 would like to know uhm, if you'll also be utilizing  
21 maybe an advisory to like, who does the - could you  
22 talk through some of the reviews or like once a  
23 document is translated, what is the review process?

24 ANNE MONTESANO: Uhm, so you know when we hire  
25 these ten language access specialists, the goal is to

1  
2 have two in each language because you can't just  
3 translate something, you need somebody to be  
4 reviewing it.

5       So, that review structure would be built in. You  
6 know we also have vendors in place that you know,  
7 because we're not going to hire everyone all at once  
8 right. There's going to be people that we bring on  
9 on a rolling basis. So, there are the vendors that  
10 we have in place, but part of what the team will also  
11 be doing as they build up and grow is, you know  
12 developing glossaries and style guides for their  
13 languages. And they will, you know, we will be  
14 ensuring that they are communicating with and  
15 engaging with community-based organizations in that  
16 process to ensure that there is you know some  
17 alignment on the terms that we are using and the  
18 translations that are being provided.

19       And the review process is built into you know  
20 quality assurance and review is built into the  
21 processes that the vendor is utilized. That's like  
22 part of the you know, part of the work that they do.  
23 So, it's not going to be just a straight translation,  
24 there's always a review in that process.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's really great. I think  
3 much of what we're discussing right now really  
4 pertains to why Intro. 570 is critical. We really  
5 want to make sure that MOIA is at its highest  
6 capacity to do the work that you're really setting up  
7 the foundation to do in the coming months. So,  
8 definitely want to engage further on really  
9 perfecting this legislation to be what you all need  
10 it to be for our city.

11 Could you speak to how much the city spends on  
12 language service contracts cumulatively?

13 MANUEL CASTRO: Well, I'll start by saying that  
14 over the last couple of years, the investment has  
15 grown in - let me just see if I can think off the top  
16 of my head. That the DCAS expenditure on language  
17 access contracts where we went from 5.9 million in  
18 2016, Fiscal Year 2016 to over 10 million in Fiscal  
19 Year 2022. Which gives you a sense of how that's  
20 grown. Most importantly that agencies and offices  
21 have tapped into the resources that we have available  
22 for language access and that will certainly continue  
23 to grow as more and more agencies continue to use  
24 those tools available for them.

1  
2 Oh, and I was just going to say; I'm sure Anne  
3 was thinking the same. This is not the only  
4 expenditure on language access contract that we have.  
5 Other offices have their own contracts separate from  
6 DCAS that they utilize for language access.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: How much is allocated to  
8 language line?

9 MANUEL CASTRO: Do you have that number?

10 ANNE MONTESANO: So, agencies have contracts with  
11 language line. So, you know we don't have a -

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, it differs agency to  
13 agency.

14 ANNE MONTESANO: It differs by agency based on  
15 their needs.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, what about for MOIA?

17 ANNE MONTESANO: We'd have to get back to you on  
18 that number specifically.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay and then what quality  
20 control measures does MOIA, or other agencies do to  
21 ensure the accuracy of services provided by  
22 contractors?

23 MANUEL CASTRO: By contractors. Well, you know  
24 it's an ongoing conversation with uh, with different  
25 agencies and offices about let's say ways to work

1  
2 with contractors, especially when there are questions  
3 of quality or challenges with contractors. They are  
4 ready to advise and support as they enter contracts  
5 and work with contractors.

6       So, a lot of our work is ongoing throughout the  
7 year. So, with that, what MOIA has traditionally  
8 done is sort of one-on-one kind of navigation work  
9 with agencies and offices. Of course, the plan that  
10 I described now looks to expand that kind of work and  
11 the importance; taking it back to having staff that  
12 are able to take a second look you know is critical.  
13 Right, we need to have staff that are able to take a  
14 second look and say whether materials that are  
15 translated are effective right and are culturally  
16 competent. Do you want to add more?

17       ANNE MONTESANO: Uhm, not too much to add to what  
18 the Commissioner said. We've you know over the  
19 years; you know we convene agency language access  
20 coordinators to share practices. So, we've convened  
21 agency coordinators and the language access  
22 coordinators in the past to advise them on how to  
23 work with language services providers. To ensure  
24 quality, we've recommended strategies to improve  
25 quality, such as having a third-party reviewer such

1  
2 as creating glossaries to improve the quality of  
3 translation. So, it's part of our work to advise  
4 agencies.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'm going to ask some  
6 questions about Local Law 30 in a bit but I'm going  
7 to just wrap up with Intro. 570. Uhm, what is the  
8 optimal number of language access specialists?  
9 You're starting off with ten, where would you like;  
10 how would you like for this team to grow? How many  
11 language access specialists would MOIA need to feel  
12 really confident with the work that you're doing?

13 MANUEL CASTRO: Well, it depends really on the  
14 tasks that they would be engaged in. I mean, I was  
15 reviewing the kind of work and the scope of work that  
16 other agencies engaged in and just ACS alone had what  
17 is like 9,000 instances of language access, in person  
18 language access work. Just one agency alone in the  
19 Fiscal Year. In DOE for instance has a team of 40  
20 linguists on staff.

21 So, you know again it varies per agency depending  
22 on the work they do of course but it's significant.  
23 Right, so it just depends on what the linguist would  
24 be tasked to do it. The plan currently really limits  
25 them to working with mayoral offices, City Hall, and



1  
2 MOIA. And beyond that, we're ready to advise and  
3 support other agencies but wouldn't take on their  
4 work.

5 ANNE MONTESANO: And we are providing services in  
6 many languages beyond the ten. So, just as an  
7 example, this calendar year, MOIAs translated  
8 materials in 46 languages. So, you know having these  
9 language access specialists in-house will be critical  
10 but it's not going to limit the number of languages  
11 that we're providing services in.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Sure, that's good to know.

13 MANUEL CASTRO: Unless we hire folks from all of  
14 these like 50 languages or 200. You know we'll  
15 continue to use other tools let's say. But again,  
16 we're committed to limited deficient languages or  
17 languages of limited deficient.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, no, thank you. This is  
19 really good to know and I'm excited to be more  
20 collaborative about Intro. 570 and learn a little bit  
21 more about the other agencies. It is very unique  
22 that you know DOE has 40 or more linguists and each  
23 agency sort of has their own protocol. So, I'll dig  
24 in a little bit deeper about that when I come to  
25

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 66

Local Law 30 compliance, but I'd like to pass it to  
Council Member Menin for her questions.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Oh, thank you so much.

Before I begin, I want to recognize we've been joined  
by Council Member Lincoln Restler and Council Member  
Julie Won. And I'm going to turn it over to Council  
Member Won to talk about her two bills for an opening  
statement.

COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Good morning. Thank you so  
much Chair Menin, Chair Ung and Chair Hanif. Today,  
we will be hearing - well, we are hearing about two  
bills that I've introduced that will expand language  
access for vulnerable populations and small  
businesses. We know how difficult COVID-19 has been,  
especially for those who have lower English  
proficiency and is their second language.

The state and federal government sometimes  
produces critical materials in English, only English  
or a limited number of languages. And the community-  
based organizations are unable to adequately serve  
these residents without access to timely translations  
as well as funding.

Intro. 137 would expand the city's language  
access law to cover emergency materials from the

1 state and federal government and many immigrant  
2 businesses struggle with high cost from fines,  
3 tickets, permits, yet resources are not available in  
4 their language. And I'm speaking from a first-hand  
5 experience as my father-in-law runs a restaurant and  
6 it has been extremely difficult with lower language  
7 competence, as well as cultural competence, for  
8 example Kimchi. When a lot of fines could be made  
9 because people are unaware that that's supposed to be  
10 fermented. That it is supposed to have a peculiar  
11 smell, as well as an acquired taste. And we want to  
12 make sure that people are able to communicate and  
13 justify why certain things are kept a certain way or  
14 is maintained a certain way, without having a  
15 language barrier. In addition to the cultural  
16 competence barrier that makes it even more difficult  
17 to jump through the hoops of the fines that make it  
18 hard to be a business owner in New York City.

19 So, Intro. 700 would require agencies to  
20 translate written materials that the agency  
21 distributes when enforcing the city laws or carrying  
22 out compliance actions. So, that people who cannot  
23 afford to have lawyers, as well as translators are  
24 not overburdened so that they can continue to create  
25

1  
2 and diversify the businesses that we have, especially  
3 the small business, so that our city continues to be  
4 what it is today. Thank you so much.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Wonderful, thank you. So,  
6 first of all, thank you to the administration for the  
7 testimony today. I have a couple questions directed  
8 to Commissioner Kim. A few things. So, first of  
9 all, as you know earlier last month, the Council  
10 passed my one-stop shop bill, which the Mayor signed,  
11 and that bill requires that the information be  
12 presented in the citywide designated languages.

13 So, I wanted to ask specifically, what  
14 information on that site will be in the citywide  
15 designated languages? Will all the information?

16 KEVIN KIM: Thank you Chair Menin for the  
17 question. As you know, the OTI is handling the  
18 actual development of the software. We of course  
19 know the importance of every New Yorker getting the  
20 information that's going to be on this portal. The  
21 point of the portal is so that everybody can get on  
22 their and then easily navigate through the city  
23 agencies in one-stop. And that's what your bill  
24 proposed and that's what has been signed into law.  
25 So, we're really excited about that.

1  
2 We know that there's a requirement by law that  
3 you're going to have to make sure that all the  
4 information on there is available to all New Yorkers.  
5 And so, that's what we expect but I do defer to OTI  
6 right now because they are in the process of doing  
7 it.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, and how is SBS working  
9 to ensure the quality of the translations? Because I  
10 just have to say, uhm, you know that has just been a  
11 chronic problem I've heard from small businesses.  
12 And this will be as you know the main portal where  
13 they'll be applying for their permit, their license,  
14 if they have fines down the line. So, I just want to  
15 make sure that the translation is where it needs to  
16 be.

17 KEVIN KIM: I think that's an excellent point.  
18 As Council Member Hanif had also mentioned, sometimes  
19 the colloquial parts of languages is challenging. My  
20 parents were small business, immigrant small business  
21 owners who didn't speak English very well and I know  
22 exactly what she's talking about. When you translate  
23 some words from Korean to English and English to  
24 Korean, they don't translate very directly.

1  
2 And so, of course what we do at our agency and  
3 because we have a – I think we're not special amongst  
4 all the city agencies, but we do have such a diverse  
5 group of staff members who are also multilingual.

6 And what we often do with our – all of our material  
7 is when they get translated, we have staff members  
8 also look at it. Multiple eyes on the same document.

9 I think it's important to make sure that you do have  
10 more than one person take a look at it to make sure  
11 that what you are actually trying to translate is  
12 getting across to the people you're trying to get  
13 across.

14 And so, we know that everything that we do, even  
15 though the city agencies, the city, I think the City  
16 Council, we all use Google translate to translate  
17 some of the other documents. At SBS, we do take that  
18 next step to have actual people review those  
19 documents.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And what about for small  
21 businesses who are not proficient in one of the  
22 citywide languages? How are they going to access  
23 this portal in terms of applying for their permit or  
24 licenses and fines?

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 71

1  
2 KEVIN KIM: Yeah, I think currently the language  
3 line is where people are using as their kind of turn  
4 to. When they come to SBS hotline, of course we have  
5 many of the top languages covered in-house, and then  
6 we also have our business solutions center, seven  
7 around the city that also have various language  
8 capabilities, but the language line service would be  
9 where we would also be able to turn to.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: when language line is not  
11 accurate; I know Chair Ung talked a little bit about  
12 inspections but when the information is not accurate,  
13 what is the liability if any to the small business  
14 owner for a fine or violation? Are they absolved of  
15 it if the information is inaccurate?

16 KEVIN KIM: That's a very good question. I think  
17 I'll have to get back to you on that. I'm not  
18 exactly sure what happens on the liability side of  
19 things.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, yeah, if you could  
21 please get back to the Committee on that, that would  
22 be helpful. I want to get back to Google translate  
23 because I'm curious what kind of feedback the agency  
24 has received on Google translate. I mean, we've - my  
25 office has it and my prior roles in government. I

1  
2 just heard so much negative feedback about this and  
3 as Chair Hanif has talked about. So, what else can  
4 be done you know to improve this situation because  
5 Google translate we know is rife with problems. So,  
6 I just want to understand sort of where the agency is  
7 on that.

8 KEVIN KIM: I think it also depends on the  
9 language. Like I said, you know our SBS compliance  
10 advisors cover six of the top languages and so, when  
11 we for example, went out to do an event with the New  
12 York Japanese Restaurant Association, they're an  
13 organization that had never previously engaged with  
14 SBS or had limited interaction.

15 And so, we had to rely on the Google translate  
16 and we were sitting there with them, and they were  
17 able to look at it, understand 90 percent of whatever  
18 was there on the websites because they had looked at  
19 it before we got there and then we were able to  
20 answer any other questions. I think that's also one  
21 of the effective ways that if you're working with  
22 communities like we are, we go into the corridors,  
23 we've done commercial corridors with almost every one  
24 of you at this point that's sitting up here. And we  
25 plan to do the rest with everybody else.



1  
2 We get to meet people in the corridors and  
3 understand better what their understanding of what  
4 the rules and regulations are and then in person,  
5 we're able to help explain that. So, I think it's  
6 got to be a combination again of using technology but  
7 not relying solely on technology and that there is a  
8 human touch that's necessary and you know whether  
9 it's through, I don't think just if you're saying  
10 language line is an issue for business owners, we  
11 also have to then supplement that with our SBS staff  
12 being able to communicate in between as well.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And I also think just in all  
14 agen- this applies to all the agencies and all agency  
15 interactions to not limit yourself to the citywide  
16 designated. So, if you're doing town halls, if  
17 you're doing other things and you're handing out  
18 materials. I know when we launched the Paid Sick  
19 Leave Law when we did the work around the Census, we  
20 went into 26 languages. We did not limit ourselves  
21 to the citywide designated. So, just really want to  
22 urge all the agencies to do that.

23 Okay, I just have two more questions. Uhm, thank  
24 you for your testimony on my bill on the Office of  
25 Small Business Digitalization. A couple questions.

1 Do you know how many websites currently – like how  
2 many small businesses have a website?  
3

4 KEVIN KIM: I'll have to get back to you on that.  
5 I don't know if we have an exact number. What we do  
6 know is something that I think we've discussed before  
7 that businesses during the pandemic that did have a  
8 website, that did have an online presence, faired  
9 better than those that did not. And that's why it's  
10 really important to make sure that we try to get this  
11 out as much as possible.

12 We are really truly understanding though that  
13 just having a website is also not enough and we work  
14 with our chamber partners. We worked with our EDC  
15 and partnership for New York City, just to help small  
16 businesses understand that we're going to help you  
17 get online but then, once you're online, we need to  
18 take that a step further and also explain to you that  
19 search engine optimization for example, needs to be  
20 used. Because having a website presence by itself  
21 isn't going to drive customers and that's why our  
22 course is here. The six module digital marketing  
23 series where we just start with developing a  
24 marketing strategy creating the actual website. But  
25 then, getting one step further and explaining and

1  
2 teaching and educating on how to use search engine  
3 optimization to actually drive businesses and to show  
4 real results. Those are the important efforts we're  
5 doing.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And then just lastly and then  
7 I want to turn it over to my colleagues. For  
8 immigrant owned small businesses, we know that those  
9 businesses are the least likely to have a website but  
10 obviously be most in need of having a website and  
11 robust online marketing. What is the agency doing to  
12 support them currently?

13 KEVIN KIM: Well, currently I think that's what I  
14 had mentioned -

15 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: I know you talked a little  
16 bit about it.

17 KEVIN KIM: Yeah, so we're really looking to  
18 partner with all the chambers, as well as EDC and  
19 partnership for New York City to get small business  
20 owners to understand the importance of having it.  
21 And then where needed, we're trying to help them find  
22 ways to get that site up and running and then really  
23 directing people to both our courses here that are  
24 free. The Launcher Online Business Course, as well  
25 as the six module digital marketing series.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And how are you disseminating  
3 that information, that those resources are available,  
4 so that small businesses know that?

5 KEVIN KIM: Sure, so I think one of the things  
6 that we again that we're really proud of is this  
7 year, we had 6,000 businesses and at the same time  
8 just during National Small Business Week, we had 500  
9 small businesses in communities that are all  
10 primarily immigrant base.

11 So, for example, when we did five boroughs in  
12 five days around the world in New York City Small  
13 Business Week, we started in Brooklyn with the  
14 Caribbean community, Caribbean Black community there,  
15 then we went to Staten Island and focused on the Sri  
16 Lankan community there. Then we went to China Town  
17 in Manhattan, then Little Columbia in Queens and then  
18 ended up with the Yemeni's community in the Bronx.

19 I think a lot of what we do is really focusing in  
20 on the immigrant communities that haven't as much  
21 engaged and making sure that they understand all of  
22 our services, including the importance of getting  
23 online and digitized.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you. I'll turn it back  
25 over to CJ to call on our colleagues.

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 77

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sure, first we'll hear  
3 questions from the bill sponsors, so we'll start with  
4 Council Member Brewer.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much.  
6 Sometimes it's good news, so I texted three to work  
7 at OATH, administrative law judges. And I said, what  
8 do you think of language opportunity at OATH?  
9 Excellent. Very good. Excellent.

10 So, I just want to say congratulations, so it's  
11 nice to hear something positive because you know,  
12 we're always looking as elected officials for  
13 negative. You know how we are but that's very  
14 positive.

15 So, my question is, if there probably is no  
16 ability to do this but does United Nations, with  
17 their translation help in any ways or any accesses or  
18 any coordination? Is it not relevant? I just was  
19 wondering with this major opportunity in the middle  
20 of our city. But they have their own world, I'm  
21 aware of that. I was just wondering if there's any  
22 collaboration, coordination, maybe through the  
23 Mayor's UN office. I don't know, I'm just asking  
24 because there is language there.

1  
2 MANUEL CASTRO: Thank you for the question  
3 Council Member. I don't know if there is any  
4 collaboration, but they probably use some of the same  
5 vendors we use.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: They do.

7 MANUEL CASTRO: Yes, because of uh, you know we -  
8 it's large scale you know interpretation work that  
9 they probably need.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, is that something  
11 that you could look at to see if there is any  
12 possibility. I mean, it does seem to me that we need  
13 the translation. They have it in some cases. Maybe  
14 we can't access it, but I just want to know if  
15 there's - I mean, they have 116 Council Generals and  
16 196 languages and people there. So, I just didn't  
17 know if there's any - something to look at right?  
18 Okay, because you do have a United Nations Office, I  
19 assume you know that. Okay.

20 The other thing I want to know is with the PEGs  
21 taking place, we don't know yet where, when, how, how  
22 much. We don't have that information but are you  
23 still able to continue hiring I guess under new  
24 needs. Because you said 1.4 for MOIA, so I was just  
25

1  
2 wondering if that's still possible despite the PEG  
3 issue?

4 MANUEL CASTRO: So, yes, all agencies have been  
5 asked to look for savings.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm aware of that, yes.

7 MANUEL CASTRO: Yeah, as far as I know this is  
8 not impacting our language access program and needs,  
9 so currently we're fine.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, and then in terms  
11 of SBS, my question is like, I have been at  
12 restaurants when the Health Inspector arrives right.  
13 And it's a kind of scary thing, like you got to put  
14 your hair in a bun. You got to find the net. You  
15 got to you know, so how would you do the language  
16 line at the same time and how would we know that the  
17 - I mean, I guess you're using it on your cellphone,  
18 so you're running to the oven to see if the  
19 temperature is right. I actually follow inspectors.  
20 You know if I see them, I run around with them, and  
21 you have to make sure that the refrigerator is the  
22 right temperature etc. You know how this goes.

23 So, I mean is there any notion that the language  
24 line works at that point because it seems to me it  
25 might be a little hard to use now. Again, you want

1  
2 to surprise people. I understand as an inspector,  
3 you don't want to tell them in advance. You don't  
4 want to know that this person speaks Urdu. You want  
5 to — so I don't know how — I just was wondering, how  
6 does this all work in terms of making sure that the  
7 person at the other end is both complying with the  
8 law but also doing it in a fair manner?

9 KEVIN KIM: Well, thank you for that question.  
10 Since we're not the regulatory agency —

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know but you have to  
12 deal with the input of the businesses who are upset.

13 KEVIN KIM: We understand the challenges. So,  
14 we're working with each of the agencies to  
15 continually improve and better serve the needs of the  
16 small business owners from inspections to the pre-  
17 inspection period. Where we really try to focus on  
18 when a business opens up is to get a compliance  
19 advisor out there and then do those pre-inspections,  
20 so that they have a better understanding and are  
21 better educated about the various rules and  
22 regulations to preserve public health and safety.

23 And so, I think a lot of that work, we're really  
24 emphasizing trying to do pre-inspection. In terms of  
25 the actual inspection process, the language



1 challenges are always there but I mean, the agencies  
2 I'd have to turn it over to them to talk to you a  
3 little bit exactly of how the process goes. But in  
4 terms of feedback, the language line access is what  
5 we rely on when the inspector is out there and you  
6 know the process can always be worked on but uhm,  
7 that's what we have right now.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, and the biggest  
10 issue; although you can't actually deal with it is  
11 the rent. That is the number one - rent, number one  
12 issue for a small business. I mean, I'm already  
13 dealing with five or six restaurants now where people  
14 speak English. It's not their first language and  
15 they're dealing with owners and the rent.

16 So, even if the issue is not one that SBS can  
17 deal with, say for instance, the Health Department or  
18 Consumer Affairs, you know an interagency problem.  
19 This is not an interagency, this is - is that  
20 something where you could still provide assistance  
21 with language?

22 KEVIN KIM: Absolutely, well, one of the things  
23 we have is our commercial lease assistance program,  
24 where tenants have; whenever they have an issue  
25 negotiating back pay, back owed rent or commercial

1  
2 lease terms, they can come to us, and we'll connect  
3 them, and they'll get free legal advise on all of  
4 that.

5 So, our CLA program also partners with a number  
6 of CBO's to make sure that everyone knows about our  
7 program but that is something that has been very  
8 popular. It is very widely used and so, if you have  
9 businesses that require that services, please, we'll  
10 help connect them to them.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: In many situations, the  
12 landlords refuse to even talk to the tenants, so  
13 that's what I'm dealing with. Which is not as great  
14 as your agency is. You can't do anything about it  
15 because I've been doing this for 30 years and your  
16 agency can't do it. So, we just try to do what we  
17 can locally.

18 And then the other question is, I guess there's  
19 two things. There's the onsite translation and then,  
20 my other question is obviously the translation of  
21 material, which is more of what 382 is about.

22 Because obviously when you're in the field, that's  
23 one kind of translation and requires staff. But I'm  
24 just wondering in terms of what additional resources  
25 the city would need to implement more translation of

1 documents, which is what Intro. 382 is about and I  
2 think also Intro. 700.

3  
4 So, are there - I mean do you think that still is  
5 an issue in terms of what needs to be done with  
6 translation of materials? It's different perhaps  
7 than in the field. They're both challenging, I'm  
8 aware of that but translation of materials can be  
9 done in-house, it's a staffing issue. Do you have  
10 any sense of that? I guess it's more MOIA than SBS.  
11 It's Health Department and Consumer Affairs in terms  
12 of 382.

13 MANUEL CASTRO: Yeah, I uh, so first of all, MOIA  
14 is always available for any assistance to  
15 troubleshoot you know challenges with translating  
16 documents or resources to translate documents. So,  
17 you know, it's an ongoing process with each of the  
18 agencies and offices we work with. We certainly  
19 think it's priority for us to have these documents  
20 available for people in the languages that they  
21 prefer, especially enforcement related documents and  
22 so on as this bill intends to do.

23 With respect to you know, to the way that  
24 agencies that enforce you know and track preferred  
25 languages and language access. I think we have DOHMH

1  
2 here and DCWP that can speak more to that, but we  
3 certainly work closely with both agencies and we're  
4 available for any support, especially on contracting.  
5 And with you know, with additional resources, we'd  
6 want to find them so that we have those materials  
7 available.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, alright, thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear questions  
10 from Council Member Won.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: I'm going to be asking  
12 questions on the bills that I've introduced. For  
13 Intro. 137, it requires that the agencies to  
14 translate certain emergency related documents the  
15 city receives from the federal and state government.  
16 We saw during COVID how dire of a need there was, yet  
17 there was lack of translation services for the small  
18 businesses during this emergency. What kind of  
19 documents would you expect the city to translate  
20 pursuant to this law? Is the first question for MOIA  
21 as well as SBS.

22 MANUEL CASTRO: Is NYSIM here? NYSIM is not here  
23 right? So, I don't believe NYSIM is here. Uh, some  
24 of the sort of details on that would be - they would  
25 be better equipped to respond to. I know that they

1  
2 translate their notify service in 14 languages, but I  
3 know that the bill intends to go beyond that, right.  
4 And to have a number of different agencies work  
5 together to make sure that business owners have the  
6 translator materials they need.

7       Yeah, we completely agree that these are really  
8 important materials and resources that need to be  
9 available. One thing that we'd like to think about  
10 is, you know what are the materials most useful for  
11 people in case of emergencies, because often  
12 materials produced by the state and the federal  
13 government, they might not be the most useful you  
14 know to translate and make available. That's  
15 something that we work on a lot. How do we make sure  
16 that the documents we put out, especially in the case  
17 of emergencies, don't confuse people or you know the  
18 most important information is not buried.

19       And that we have more control over with internal  
20 documents as opposed to federal and state documents,  
21 that we have no role in.

22       COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Right, because we saw during  
23 COVID how there was a lot of confusion for PPE. What  
24 is required inside for dining. What is required  
25 outside for vaccination card checks, as well as

1  
2 outdoor dining. There was so much confusion because  
3 there were multiple documents that say different  
4 things and a lack of language translation.

5 Currently, how does the city work with its  
6 federal and state counterparts to ensure that these  
7 kind of documents are accessible to LEP New Yorkers?

8 KEVIN KIM: The federal documents?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Yeah, federal and state,  
10 especially the external documents that are being  
11 shared with our small businesses.

12 KEVIN KIM: So, I think part of what Commissioner  
13 Castro alluded to is when you want to distinguish  
14 between certain emergency situations or not but just  
15 as an example of what SBS did during the pandemic to  
16 help small businesses was, we made sure to translate  
17 the key to NYC vaccine requirements and best  
18 practices. And we also did a vaccine referral bonus  
19 program. The MWBE procurement information, the SBS  
20 grant and loan programs and the fair share program.  
21 The small business adaptation playbook, those were  
22 all things that were translated to make sure that  
23 everybody had the same information as quickly as  
24 possible.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: So, Commissioner Kim, can  
3 you help me understand when a federal document is  
4 produced, are they translating on behalf of the city  
5 or who – like where does the buck stop? Is it the  
6 city or is it the federal government or the state  
7 government? Who is actually providing the  
8 translations for these documents. I want to know  
9 where the expectation is.

10 MANUEL CASTRO: Well, I believe – we'll need to  
11 verify, but I believe each of the governments have to  
12 translate their own materials, if that's the state  
13 and the city because often policies defer, right.  
14 So, from my experience running a nonprofit, I mean,  
15 the same materials were provided to us during COVID  
16 and they we're all over the place. Right, there were  
17 the policies as to you know, when to mask, where to  
18 mask. They were very different at all levels of  
19 government.

20 And some materials were translated, some not.  
21 So, it goes beyond just the materials translated,  
22 it's just the differences in policies. What we'd  
23 like not to do is confuse where these policies, the  
24 information is coming from but like I said, for us  
25 it's important as well, to make sure that all

1 materials are translated for the communities that  
2 live in New York City and they have all the  
3 information they need.

4  
5 And so, the state, uh, just announced the  
6 creation of an Office of Language Access. This was  
7 just announced like a few weeks ago. And I believe  
8 it's housed under the Office of General Operations,  
9 uh, services, general services. I just spoke with  
10 the Commissioner there. We're going to have a  
11 meeting to discuss how we do language access and have  
12 more collaboration.

13 They really, well, I don't want to get in  
14 trouble, but it seems like they modeled you know a  
15 lot of what they're doing based on what we do in New  
16 York City. I'm totally going to get in trouble, but  
17 you know we want to make sure that we have a  
18 collaborative partnership there.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay, because what I find  
20 troubling that we hear from small businesses is that  
21 there is not only conflicting information from what  
22 the states regulations may be for COVID. This is  
23 just an example because we know that there will be  
24 other emergencies, like a fire or for ventilation  
25 within a business, but we're also hearing, not only



1  
2 is there conflicting information in what the policies  
3 are saying, we're also having conflicting information  
4 from different levels, which I agree, we're deferring  
5 to the state and the federal government but if we can  
6 figure out a way for us to be aligned. Because now,  
7 it adds an added layer to the translations where what  
8 good is it if you have translations. If you have  
9 three documents saying three different things as a  
10 small business owner and you don't have the legal  
11 know how's or the knowledge or the access to  
12 understand what do I follow?

13 Uhm, the last question for Intro. 137 is, do you  
14 anticipate that the agencies would need additional  
15 resources to translate these documents, or do you  
16 feel that they are now adequately staffed and have  
17 the resources to do so?

18 MANUEL CASTRO: Yeah, no, certainly you know that  
19 would increase the scope of work tremendously. You  
20 know, having the responsibility to in addition to  
21 translate our city documents. You know, take on  
22 state and federal documents. And again, some of the  
23 information might not be the best to translate you  
24 know or the most useful.

25

1  
2       So, we'd have to look at all those details and  
3 think through what the criteria might be. You know,  
4 what - you know, it's a question of how we used our  
5 resources smartly in a case of an emergency.

6       COUNCIL MEMBER WON: When we talk about  
7 emergencies, outside of COVID-19, the pandemic, I  
8 also think about Hurricane Ida, like the flooding or  
9 a fire. I want to make that when we are using  
10 translations for such dire need, that this is really  
11 truly a matter of life or death. That we're not  
12 using Google translate. So, is there some sort of  
13 policy within MOIA to ensure that that does not  
14 happen? That we avoid using things like Google  
15 translate, so that when people are about to die that  
16 they are fully - we're using fully comprehensive  
17 services for language translations?

18       MANUEL CASTRO: Yes, this is part of our ongoing  
19 capacity building for all of the city agencies and  
20 offices. We convene language access coordinators.  
21 Each agency has an appointed language access  
22 coordinator. And so, we work closely with them to  
23 share best practices. Certainly, we're going to take  
24 the time to review our work during COVID-19 and make

1  
2 sure that the learnings from there are implemented  
3 into our future work.

4 KEVIN KIM: And I can just jump in on those  
5 emergencies Council Member. What SBS does is we have  
6 a business preparation program. So, prior to any  
7 future emergencies like Hurricane Ida, Hurricane  
8 Sandy, we send out our staff to work with business  
9 especially in those communities to help them prepare  
10 for future emergencies. To know all the things that  
11 they need to do in terms of gathering and having  
12 copies of important business documents, tax returns,  
13 not to all be at their business location in case  
14 something like that happens.

15 So, we do want to emphasize that the B-Prep  
16 program that we have is something that everyone  
17 should take advantage of.

18 MANUEL CASTRO: And Council Member, Anne can add  
19 more details that I think are critical.

20 ANNE MONTESANO: Yeah, just to add, you know I  
21 think certain agencies also you know create their own  
22 guidance materials and are translating those. I know  
23 DOHMH does that in public health crisis. MOIA has  
24 often developed our own documents to simplify certain  
25 information and resources, including developing

1  
2 graphics and social media content, as well and  
3 translating those.

4 And so, you know we are taking the content that  
5 is out there and trying to make it accessible and  
6 multilingual. And NYSIM, through their Notify NYC  
7 program, as the Commissioner mentioned earlier, is  
8 translating emergency notifications into 14 languages  
9 and they're often amplifying emergency messages from  
10 other agencies through that channel.

11 MANUEL CASTRO: And can I just because this is an  
12 important aspect of what I've encouraged us to think  
13 about at the office when it comes to language access.  
14 It's not just language access, it's cultural  
15 competency for sure. It's also using language that  
16 is accessible and you know, plain language so that  
17 our communities can actually understand what is we're  
18 trying to communicate, especially in the case of an  
19 emergency or in case of documents that you know  
20 they'll have to really follow. You know otherwise  
21 consequences exist right.

22 And so, uhm, which is why I'm thinking through  
23 how would it look like to integrate state and federal  
24 materials. I'm not sure they always consider those  
25

1 things as we are trying to but yes, definitely, this  
2 is an issue that matters quite a lot to us.

3  
4 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Uh, my last question for 137  
5 is, for the – once the languages are translated for  
6 emergency cases, what is the protocol for MOIA and  
7 SBS to ensure that the most vulnerable small  
8 businesses that are run by immigrants are getting  
9 this information? Because we know that they have  
10 lower digital literacy. They aren't as connected.  
11 They are not on the emergency app on their phones.  
12 So, what protocols do you have to ensure that your  
13 outreach is done to cast the widest net possible  
14 during such an emergency?

15 MANUEL CASTRO: Yeah, I mean I think uhm, just  
16 you know as to your question about also how we work  
17 with federal and state agencies. We did translate –  
18 we have over 70 materials that we actually translated  
19 during the pandemic and subsequently and we do work  
20 closely with the state and federal agencies that  
21 issue those kinds of information packets to make sure  
22 the translation is coordinated.

23 In terms of outreach, we understand that the  
24 immigrant populations in particular aren't the ones  
25 on the receiving ends of email, blast email

1  
2 notifications. And so, that's why developing the  
3 close community partnerships that we've done, also  
4 focusing with our BID and merchant association. So,  
5 while we may have 76 BIDs in the city, there's also a  
6 large number of smaller merchant associations that  
7 focus in on immigrant communities. We have  
8 established very strong relationships, so that  
9 whenever something new comes out, they get alerted  
10 real time and that way they can get the word out to  
11 their members as well.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Thank you. Chair Ung and  
13 Menin, is it okay if I ask questions on Intro. 700 or  
14 do you want to come back to me? Okay. For Intro.  
15 700, it would require compliance documents  
16 distributed by city agencies to be translated into  
17 designated citywide languages. What are some of the  
18 more common compliance documents that agencies  
19 distribute to small business owners?

20 KEVIN KIM: Well, when we go out to our  
21 commercial corridor lots for example, we have a nice  
22 little bag, we have a nice little packet that  
23 explains all of our resources and you know while we  
24 may be a relatively small agency, we do a lot of work  
25 in different areas. So, we want to make sure that

1  
2 the business owners know that we have a capital  
3 access program. They can call us to learn about not  
4 just city programs, not just our CDFI community  
5 partners but all the state grants and loan programs  
6 that might be out there and any federal type of  
7 opportunities as well.

8 So, that's something we know. Access to capital  
9 is a major issue for all small business owners and in  
10 particular, our BIPOC and immigrant community,  
11 immigrant owned businesses. So, capital access is  
12 definitely translated. Our Compliance Advisor  
13 Program, our NYC BEST program, which helps all the  
14 small business owners cut through a red tape, that is  
15 also very thoroughly translated. And then, we talk  
16 about our Commercial Lease Assistance program and all  
17 the other programs that we have.

18 So, in terms of every resource that we have at  
19 SBS in the required languages, at least we have  
20 materials that are translated.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Currently, if a small  
22 business owner needs those materials translated, how  
23 does the city assist them? So, there's a compliance  
24 document that it currently isn't translated, who can  
25

1  
2 they go to and how is that translation done and  
3 distributed?

4 KEVIN KIM: So, I think one of the ways that  
5 we've been able to effectively reach people during  
6 the pandemic and thereafter is our hotline. When  
7 people have I think over 80,000 people have called  
8 the hotline and been helped through that. We have  
9 our business solution centers that are spread around  
10 the city and they also have various language  
11 capabilities, but the language line access is  
12 something that we use if we don't have the in-house  
13 capability. We do cover our compliance advisor,  
14 small business advocates by themselves. You know  
15 cover six different popular language or the top most  
16 used languages. And so, if it doesn't fall into that  
17 category, then we do rely on other services like  
18 language line.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay and I know that the  
20 Commissioner from MOIA has said how we need to make  
21 sure that it's in plain English. So, compliance  
22 documents are often complex and legalistic, even in  
23 English. Whereas one with higher education may still  
24 not understand it if they don't have a law degree.  
25 So, are translated compliance documents available in



1  
2 plain English, so that people may understand fully  
3 what is required of them to run their business?

4 MANUEL CASTRO: I think we'd probably have to  
5 defer to DCWP and DOHMH, Department of Health and  
6 Mental Hygiene for you know ways to go about to  
7 developing those languages. MOIA did create a great  
8 guide to writing in plain language. That is, you  
9 know appears to be more effectively translated and we  
10 do share these resources across city agencies.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Are there other avenues that  
12 small business owners can obtain help if they don't  
13 understand the materials that they've received. So,  
14 even if the compliance materials have been received  
15 in their native language, and they still don't  
16 understand it, is there somewhere they can go for  
17 helping them further their understanding?

18 KEVIN KIM: Yeah, I think if they call the  
19 hotline or if they're part of local community  
20 organizations, they can turn to them, but we  
21 definitely have been making a concerted effort to go  
22 into smaller communities. For example, you know we  
23 reached out proactively to the Mung community, which  
24 is very small here, but I think it's just an example  
25 of us not trying to leave any community out. We've

1  
2 gone into little Pakistan and when we had meetings  
3 with their group, community leaders and group members  
4 and business owners, they brought out the ethnic  
5 media that's covering their communities and I think  
6 that's been very effective.

7       So, we understand that proactive outreach is  
8 incredibly important and so, we are actually  
9 intentionally going in to make sure that then when we  
10 go in that they bring out their ethnic media groups  
11 to be able to spread the word, so that all those who  
12 are not actually able to attend those roundtable  
13 discussions, still understand and get information  
14 about all of SBSs services.

15       COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Thank you so much. I know  
16 about from a lot of the small business associations  
17 from ethnic groups, they talk about how they feel  
18 that it's inequitable, because not only do they not  
19 speak the language, but they also don't have the  
20 legal resources to pay for it. Therefore, they  
21 continue to agate fines, and they have to pay them  
22 while they see their counterparts who may be more  
23 privileged, are able to afford the lawyers to go to  
24 court and fight those fines and appeal and they get  
25 away with it.

1  
2 So, thank you so much for all the work that  
3 you're doing.

4 KEVIN KIM: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member Won.  
6 Next, we'll hear questions from Council Member  
7 Schulman.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you very much. I  
9 want to thank - first, I want to thank my colleagues  
10 Chair Ung, Hanif and Menin for this very important  
11 hearing today. Our small businesses are the  
12 financial backbone of our city and many of these  
13 businesses as we all know are run by immigrants.

14 So, I have some questions. One for Commissioner  
15 Kim. By the way, I represent Central Queens and you  
16 have some fans, big fans there. I just wanted tell  
17 you.

18 KEVIN KIM: Thank you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Uhm, so SBSs language  
20 access plan indicates that the agency works directly  
21 with ethnic press to promote services that are  
22 available in multiple languages. What ethnic press  
23 outlets does SBS work with?

24 KEVIN KIM: We have a very long extensive list,  
25 which we'll share with you later. We do try to make

1  
2 sure that we stay updated. We're very much in close  
3 contact and coordination with Jose Biona (SP?) who  
4 leads the Mayor's Office of Ethnic Media.

5 And so, as I mentioned to Council Member Won's  
6 question that we are proactively trying to engage  
7 communities that have also not historically been  
8 engaged with SBS and the city resources. And so,  
9 we'll continue to add to that list, but we'll share  
10 that list with you.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: I appreciate that and  
12 by the way, the Mayor's head of the ethnic press  
13 lives in my district in Forest Hills.

14 But also, I want to mention that one of those  
15 groups, I represent the Bahamian Jewish Community, so  
16 that's one group that I know doesn't really access  
17 those services. So, I want to work closely with you  
18 on that.

19 KEVIN KIM: Yes.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: How does SBS ensure  
21 that it's promoting its services and the right  
22 outlets and in a manner that's culturally  
23 appropriate?

24 KEVIN KIM: So, we definitely coordinate with the  
25 local Council Members. We also coordinate with the

1 local community-based organizations, local BIDs,  
2 local merchant associations. Because we know that we  
3 don't know everything. We need to be culturally  
4 sensitive as well as language accessible. We do send  
5 our mobile unit out because we know that not  
6 everybody can come to our offices in One Liberty Park  
7 or access our seven business solution centers. And  
8 we do that I think a little differently than has been  
9 done in the past, where we really do partner up with  
10 MOIA and other DCWP and other agencies, sister  
11 agencies so that when we're out in a community, we're  
12 not just offering our services about workforce  
13 development centers and all of our division of  
14 business services. But we can also talk about all  
15 the other great things that the city has to offer,  
16 whether you're an immigrant or somebody who has been  
17 here for many, many years and require the access of  
18 some of our services.

19  
20 We are very proud of the social media campaigns  
21 that we've really accelerated. We helped create RV  
22 into a digital character called MOBY and that's  
23 gotten a lot of views over the past few months, and  
24 we understand that the constant communication to our  
25

1  
2 constituents is changing and we're trying to stay on  
3 top of that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Do you have - speaking  
5 of social media, do you have a digital content person  
6 that helps you? Because I know the platforms keep  
7 changing all the time even with my staff in my  
8 office.

9 KEVIN KIM: Yes, no, that's an excellent point.  
10 We have multiple people on our team now focused on  
11 creating more digital content in our social media  
12 channels. You realize that people don't absorb  
13 information the same way and so, you know we're proud  
14 of the work that we've put into for example, creating  
15 a 30 second video on what is a BID, so that we can  
16 get that out. Because you know, most people hear  
17 BID, BID, BID but they don't know what it is. They  
18 don't know how to get it started. So, we put it down  
19 into like a school house rock format and then with  
20 music and then, we're hoping that more people will  
21 start digesting this and realizing how important it  
22 is to try to create these organizations, commercial  
23 organizations in their districts.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you. I'm going  
25 to switch gears slightly to COVID. So, what steps

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 103

1  
2 has the city taken to evaluate how immigrant owned  
3 small businesses were impacted by COVID-19 pandemic?  
4 And what has the city learned from its analysis?

5 KEVIN KIM: I think we learned clearly that there  
6 were certain neighborhoods that were more impacted  
7 than others and that also BIPOC and immigrant owned  
8 communities and small business owners were also  
9 disproportionately impacted. A lot of what we do at  
10 SBS, almost everything we do is based on the social  
11 equity principle of making sure that we can serve the  
12 underserved. All of our programming that we are  
13 talking about with respect to the smaller BIDs for  
14 example, the \$800,000 and the \$3 million that we're  
15 investing and supporting merchant – and there'll be  
16 more support for merchant associations that's also  
17 coming. But the BID, the smaller BID support for  
18 example, identify those commercial corridors that got  
19 hit extra hard and we want to make sure that they get  
20 the back-office support. They get the city's  
21 resources to be able to help the small businesses  
22 that sit in those commercial corridors.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Chair, can I ask a  
24 couple more questions? Thank you.

1  
2 Does the city have data on the percentage of  
3 impacted businesses that required in-language  
4 assistance or translation interpretation services  
5 through COVID?

6 KEVIN KIM: I don't know if we have the -  
7 actually, I'll have to get back to you on that. We  
8 do know that over 80,000 people called our hotline  
9 alone on top of all the additional outreach we did  
10 and anyone who needed the additional language  
11 services, we were able to connect them with the  
12 appropriate language.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay, if you have that,  
14 that would be great and were impacted businesses  
15 concentrated in certain parts of the city amongst  
16 specific communities to your knowledge?

17 KEVIN KIM: Yes, absolutely. As I mentioned, I  
18 think the analysis shows that the immigrant owned and  
19 BIPOC owned businesses were disproportionately  
20 impacted. So, a lot of what we're trying to do as  
21 part of this economic recovery, small businesses are  
22 as you mentioned the lifeline of the economy and the  
23 immigrant owned businesses are at the center of you  
24 know, make up over half, almost half of all small  
25 businesses.



COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 105

1  
2 So, we are every day focused on trying to get  
3 them to lead our economic recovery because we have  
4 to.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And I appreciate that.  
6 I'm also the Chair of the Health Committee and so, at  
7 some point I'd love to have a conversation with you  
8 and DOHMH about preparing for the future. And I also  
9 look forward; I know my office is working with your  
10 office to have you come out to my district, so thank  
11 you very much.

12 KEVIN KIM: We look forward to that too. Thank  
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. I just have one  
15 quick follow-up question for OATH. I'll be quick.  
16 Who is OATH's vendor for translating written  
17 decisions.

18 KEVIN KIM: The vendor? The vendor is uhm, one  
19 sec., LM services.

20 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Great, thank you. That's all  
21 of the questions I have. Does any other Chairs have  
22 any follow-up questions?

23 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I do. Thank you. Uhm,  
24 Commissioner Kim, okay, so, I really appreciated  
25 learning about this like interesting dynamic of how

1  
2 we utilize Google translate to then connect with the  
3 Japanese business owners. Could you speak to which  
4 other immigrant communities you've been building with  
5 that have never been connected to SBS services in the  
6 past.

7 KEVIN KIM: I do have a list here somewhere. I'm  
8 happy to send it to you but we do have a sampling of  
9 the list that I know is in here somewhere, but you  
10 know for example, while Deputy Commissioner is  
11 looking for the actual list, I can tell you that when  
12 we went to Borough Park for example, with the  
13 [INAUDIBLE 2:04:20] community and we were just going  
14 to go - we proactively reached out just to have  
15 discussions and as part of what we've been trying to  
16 do to reach communities that we hadn't really seen as  
17 much engagement. And they had told us that  
18 themselves organize a big breakfast and probably  
19 about 70 to 100 business owners showed up and they  
20 said, we had never had SBS here.

21 So, I think that's one example. I know little  
22 Pakistan. I mean, it's hard to say because sometimes  
23 you're only dealing with a segment of a particular  
24 community and they, themselves may never have seen it  
25 while you know, SBS might have had engagement in

1  
2 other parts of the communities. But at least from  
3 the people that we're talking to, when we went out to  
4 Jamaica Queens with a Bangladesh community there,  
5 they said, they hadn't seen us out there. So, we are  
6 really looking to see where - where's this. Oh, uh,  
7 so you know, and I think we had done work with the  
8 Sri Lankan community in Staten Island for example. I  
9 had mentioned that and uhm, and we do have plans to  
10 go to Little Manilla for example in Queens. We went  
11 to Little Columbia as part of Small Business Week and  
12 then the Yemeni's community, we've been working very  
13 closely with. Although they had some parts of the  
14 community had prior relationships and so forth.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, that's really  
16 encouraging to learn and speaks to your leadership  
17 here and the team that you've assembled. How often  
18 for these interactions and building with these uh,  
19 the businesses that have not been already  
20 incorporated to SBS services, uhm, have yet to rely  
21 on Google translate for document translation.

22 KEVIN KIM: Well, so far those communities, I  
23 don't think we've had to because like Urdu is one of  
24 the top ten languages. Bangla is also one. Uhm, you  
25

1  
2 know the other communities in general, I don't think  
3 we've had to rely on Google translate.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, Google translate comes in  
5 when -

6 KEVIN KIM: And that's only for actually website.  
7 So, it's not for other documents. Because other  
8 documents we use vendor services and yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. So, Google translate  
10 is like not the kind of go to -

11 KEVIN KIM: No, it's just for the website and all  
12 the information we have on there. It can just be a  
13 first stop for people whose languages might now be  
14 you know in-house available.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, that's good to  
16 understand.

17 MANUEL CASTRO: Can I add?

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Oh yeah, go ahead.

19 MANUEL CASTRO: Council Member just going to add,  
20 all agencies and offices have contracts with vendors  
21 to use - to translate their official materials with.  
22 And so, uh, we always encourage all the agencies to  
23 use that. As Commissioner Kim mentioned, you know  
24 sometimes Google translate appears when it's the last  
25 you know resort. So, websites and it seems like you

1  
2 were visiting someone and that was the only thing  
3 available. But uh, certainly the available resources  
4 are there for professional interpretation and  
5 translation.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then the Google translate  
7 that you might use, is that like just uh free version  
8 that we all have access to or is there something that  
9 the city has subscribed to that is like - has  
10 unlocked a different version of Google translate?

11 ANNE MONTESANO: No, but again, the Google  
12 translate is what's appearing on websites, not for  
13 materials that -

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's good to know.

15 ANNE MONTESANO: And not all agencies are relying  
16 on Google translate. So, some agencies are human  
17 translating parts of their website at least. MOIA  
18 translates all of it. So, there's different  
19 strategies used here.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, okay, that's good to  
21 know because then that definitely raises concerns  
22 about various agency documents that are then shared  
23 out that have some challenges in or criticism around  
24 whether this is actually understandable or  
25 comprehensive.

1  
2 ANNE MONTESANO: Right, but it's - right, but  
3 it's not Google translate that's being utilized.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Good to know.

5 KEVIN KIM: So, I think I'm the one who started  
6 all of this. I need to clarify. It is really a last  
7 resort and the example I used with the Japanese  
8 Restaurant Association was because we were there.  
9 And then just to introduce them more about our  
10 website, we were able to show them, if you need it  
11 here, you can also do this but they spoke English and  
12 so it was just another way to show that if as a last  
13 resort. But all of our other resource material  
14 documents would be done by vendor, not through Google  
15 translate and print out and hand out. We wouldn't do  
16 that unless it was - we wouldn't do that and it's  
17 just on the website that we use as a last resort.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then how quickly or could  
19 you share the timeline of how long it might take for  
20 a document to be translated by a vendor?

21 KEVIN KIM: I don't know but I'll get back to  
22 you.

23 ANNE MONTESANO: I mean, the time it takes to  
24 translate a document depends on so many factors.  
25 What language? You know how many languages? The

1 length of the document? The complexity? Whether  
2 there is desktop publishing that needs to be  
3 utilized. So, it really depends on what the document  
4 is.  
5

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, let's say there's an  
7 announcement that there's a grant available to small  
8 businesses and it goes out in three days. Is the  
9 vendor available to translate in an expedited fashion  
10 to get that information out alongside the launch.

11 KEVIN KIM: Having seen the grant process, I know  
12 it would rarely be three days. It would be a much  
13 longer, much, much longer lead time. And so, we  
14 would make sure you know the priority for the  
15 administration is to make sure that every New Yorker  
16 gets access at the same time.

17 And so, we would definitely have those prepared  
18 prior to such an announcement.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, that's also good to  
20 know. You mentioned that on your SBS hotline, uh,  
21 1,100 calls were received in languages other than  
22 English. What were some of the prominent languages?

23 KEVIN KIM: What were the most common language?  
24 I think Spanish was probably the most common and then  
25 followed by a dialect of Chinese is probably the two

1  
2 most common. But we've had Russian, Bangla, we've  
3 had all sorts of Urdu.

4 Since we've done the outreach in those  
5 communities, we have seen an uptick in calls in those  
6 particular languages, which is what we're hoping to  
7 see.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood. And then it's  
9 really wonderful to know about the free business  
10 courses that are offered across languages designated  
11 by the language access law. Could you share what  
12 outreach looks like for participation in these  
13 courses?

14 KEVIN KIM: A lot of it is through - well, we  
15 have the traditional email network, but we also make  
16 sure that again, as I had mentioned, that social  
17 media is a big part of it and understanding different  
18 communities preference for different social media  
19 channels. So, we try to get word out through all of  
20 the various social media channels. For the first  
21 time this year, we also use Tik Tok for example,  
22 understanding that some of the younger generation in  
23 particular are more tuned to that and as you had  
24 talked about, sometimes with immigrant business  
25 owners, it's really the children that kind of are the



1  
2 best source of initial information and then they can  
3 mention into their parents, hey, there's also this  
4 for your restaurant or your small business to the  
5 parents.

6 So, we understand that information to the small  
7 business owner comes from so many different ways, and  
8 we have to try to hit all of them. So, social media,  
9 the emails, the community organizations, the BIDs,  
10 the merchant associations, the CBO's, the Community  
11 Boards. We try every means possible.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then how many owners to  
13 date, I guess like this year, last year, have taken  
14 these courses? Or how frequently are they offered?

15 KEVIN KIM: Our webinars are readily accessible.  
16 I can get you how often and we definitely have  
17 numbers on that.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then yeah, because  
19 they're offered in this abundance list of languages.  
20 Would love to know just which communities we're  
21 seeing showing up and taking advantage of these  
22 courses.

23 KEVIN KIM: And just one thing on the outreach.  
24 So, we've had over 340 multilingual ads that have  
25 been you know distributed out. So, we again, also do

1 use the ethnic media as a vehicle to get to  
2 communities.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's really great. Uhm,  
5 and then on the compliance advisors that provide  
6 onsite consultations, how are these languages  
7 determined? Because I see like the courses are  
8 offered in many more languages than the compliance  
9 advisors. Like, could you share a little bit about  
10 the discrepancies.

11 KEVIN KIM: Well, with the compliance advisors, I  
12 think it's just that we have six, seven compliance  
13 advisors in-house. And so, while they're out in the  
14 field, we're obviously very mindful to have as much  
15 language capability. And so, the seven compliance  
16 advisors in particular speak those particular  
17 languages. That's why it's the limit of the human  
18 person.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood and is there  
20 interest to expand or bring on more compliance folks  
21 on the team?

22 KEVIN KIM: I think that currently with the seven  
23 plus we have how many small business advocates?  
24 Four, we have four small business advocates and then  
25 what we did was we reorganized our agency last month

1  
2 to include a brand-new outreach team. And I think  
3 the outreach team will also be able to connect as  
4 many more small business owners because we'll just be  
5 a little bit more efficient in how we do our outreach  
6 and then get them connected with the small business  
7 advocates and the compliance advisors who speak all  
8 these multiple languages and make sure that more  
9 immigrant small business owners gets access to our  
10 services.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Wonderful, thank you.

12 Commissioner Castro. So, based on the latest Local  
13 Law 30 report, it appears that MOIA hasn't updated  
14 the list of designated citywide languages since the  
15 law first took effect in 2017. And as a result, the  
16 current list is based on data from 2016 and earlier,  
17 which at this point is outdated. When does MOIA  
18 intend to update the list of designated citywide  
19 languages?

20 MANUEL CASTRO: So, we conducted a review last  
21 year and the top ten languages remain the same.  
22 There was some variations in numbers of course but  
23 they remain the same. There is no requirement in the  
24 Local Law 30 that triggers a review every so often or  
25 a way to determine you know when these you know

1  
2 languages changes. But we're committed to conducting  
3 these reviews often, so that we make sure that those  
4 ten languages you know are those that appear in the  
5 data.

6 With that said, we go beyond the top ten  
7 languages. And so, we are translating materials into  
8 this year, 46 languages and that will likely grow.  
9 So, yeah.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then the Local Law 30  
11 report indicates that DCAS has a number of citywide  
12 language services contracts that expire this year.  
13 What services were provided pursuant to these  
14 contracts and what vendors did the city use?

15 ANNE MONTESANO: So, DCAS has citywide language  
16 services contracts for a range of language services,  
17 including telephonic interpretation, in-person  
18 interpretation, translation services as well as ACL  
19 transcription. Uhm, and so, those contracts you know  
20 were initiated over ten years ago. The contracts  
21 expired but agencies still had the ability to extend  
22 their task orders.

23 And so, we MOIA, along with DCAS and the Mayor's  
24 Office of Contracts in advance of the expiration,

1 almost a year in advance, have been working with  
2 agencies to ensure that there's no gaps in services.

3  
4 And so, you know our work over the last almost  
5 year was working with agencies so that there would be  
6 no gaps in services when those contracts expired.  
7 But like I said, agencies could, and many did extend  
8 their task orders.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, that's really good to  
10 know. And then, how does MOIA monitor covered  
11 agencies to ensure robust compliance with Local Law  
12 30?

13 MANUEL CASTRO: You mentioned the Local Law 30  
14 report. You know this is one of the things that MOIA  
15 is charged to do, to work with agencies and offices  
16 on their language access plan. Being in constant  
17 communication with them. Provide one-on-one  
18 assistance and support throughout the year. Collect  
19 these plans, review their language access, work and  
20 publish it, and you know, we also report on you know  
21 data that we receive from the public about language  
22 access. You know 311 calls with feedback and so on.  
23 So, we have an ongoing relationship with all these  
24 agencies. We also monitor their contracts of course  
25 with providers in you know their use. And as well,

1  
2 some of the agencies track data themselves. We work  
3 with them on that.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. The Council  
5 advocated and secured a commitment from the Admin to  
6 include \$5 million in the November plan for a  
7 community interpreter bank and language service  
8 worker owned cooperative. I want to emphasize you  
9 know again that there's no silver bullet solution to  
10 language access in New York City and we really need  
11 all the range of opportunities to address language  
12 justice.

13 And so, I'd like to know if you can share an  
14 update Commissioner Castro on any ongoing  
15 conversation with OMB or other agencies about the \$5  
16 million funding.

17 MANUEL CASTRO: And we're very excited about this  
18 initiative. In fact, I shared last time that this  
19 was something I advocated for when I was working as  
20 an advocate.

21 We're right now still waiting some details to  
22 come from City Council and to learn more about which  
23 agency will have oversight over this project and once  
24 we know, we'll definitely work very closely with the  
25 agency and the nonprofits, and the Council Members

1  
2 involved to make sure that this is successful. And I  
3 think it will go a long way to developing a workforce  
4 really that can do this for this kind of work for our  
5 agencies and beyond.

6 I know a lot of other nonprofits that are excited  
7 to tap into these resources as well.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Wonderful, excited about it  
9 too. I have a question for DCWP. Many street  
10 vendors in New York City as we know are immigrants,  
11 speak many languages. How does DCWP conduct outreach  
12 to these vendors to ensure they receive important  
13 information in their spoken languages? And of  
14 course, really grateful to learn that you already  
15 work the Street Vendor Project, they've been such an  
16 incredible advocate.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Before you begin, I'll just  
18 swear you in. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the  
19 whole truth and nothing but the truth before this  
20 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member  
21 questions?

22 CARLOS ORTIZ: I do.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thanks.

24 CARLOS ORTIZ: Thank you for your question  
25 Council Member. I think with respect to outreach,

1  
2 you know community partners, advocacy organizations  
3 are one of our primary routes to communicate with  
4 street vendors. Additionally, in terms of our  
5 marketing and our guidance materials, we ensure that  
6 those are translated into more than the ten languages  
7 mandated by Local Law 30.

8 I think for us, across any type of business that  
9 we're inspecting, language access is an essential  
10 tenant to ensure that there is an understanding of  
11 the inspection process and any next steps that  
12 subsequently follow. Within our entire enforcement  
13 unit, we speak I think 29 languages and within the  
14 street vending unit itself, we speak 13 languages.

15 And so, I'm sorry, just one more piece. The  
16 inspection process that you might see for a street  
17 vendor is very kin to what you might see for a brick  
18 and mortar business. And that is to say, if we have  
19 language capacity with the inspectors language  
20 capacity to speak with the business in the preferred  
21 language, they will utilize that language capacity.  
22 If we do not have that capacity, then we use language  
23 line as a way to facilitate the inspection.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it and could you just  
25 walk us through, I know a variation of this question



1  
2 has been asked. Like, how language line is utilized  
3 during these inspections?

4 CARLOS ORTIZ: I think it's very similar to what  
5 my colleague mentioned earlier and what probably  
6 happens at other agencies. We have a card that we  
7 utilize and to try and work through with the business  
8 what language they might prefer. I personally have  
9 utilized language line in the field during outreach  
10 and there have been times where perhaps that language  
11 is not on the card and it's really a process of  
12 working with the contracted provider and the  
13 constituent trying to identify any key words that  
14 might be helpful in figuring out which language is  
15 most successful to complete the inspection. Or in my  
16 particular scenario, it's a complete sum of the  
17 education we are conducting.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it, thank you. Do any of  
19 my colleagues here have additional questions. Go for  
20 it Council Member Brewer.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. I know you  
22 mentioned - first of all, congratulations on  
23 everything but my question is about DCAS and  
24 languages and the contracts. So, I think what you're  
25 saying is DCAS has all the contracts and then the

1  
2 agencies access them, but then how is that true? And  
3 then DCAS will obviously give us a cost, not you.  
4 But then if you have example, new law, state, city or  
5 federal, it has to be translated for somebody in  
6 terms of the paper. Is that like an emergency  
7 contract? Is it a retaining contract? How does that  
8 work in terms of just the contracts for the different  
9 agencies.

10 ANNE MONTESANO: So, for the first question, DCAS  
11 had citywide language services contracts for a range  
12 of services, which city agencies had the opportunity  
13 to buy into and many did. Not all city agencies  
14 utilized the DCAS citywide contracts. Some go  
15 outside and —

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: To get their own.

17 ANNE MONTESANO: Yeah and get their own through  
18 the you know —

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: To supplement or to  
20 compliment, right?

21 ANNE MONTESANO: Yeah, or just instead of.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Instead of, okay.

23 ANNE MONTESANO: So, it's up to the agency. Uhm,  
24 and then I'm sorry.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The second issue, you  
3 need something translated. The word would be last  
4 minute because there's some new law blah, blah, blah.  
5 How do you - is that an emergency contract? Is it  
6 something on retainer? You need a new, in Creole.  
7 You need something translated in Creole that's coming  
8 out of Health Department, Consumer Affairs, buildings  
9 or whatever. How would that - is that part of a  
10 citywide contract? That's what I'm asking.

11 ANNE MONTESANO: Uhm, well city agencies you know  
12 have their own mechanisms for doing that. MOIA has  
13 in the past supported sort of rapid translations  
14 during COVID. We supported rapid translations. You  
15 know, so it depends on the city agency and what their  
16 resources are.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I guess what I'm trying  
18 to say, we're all trying to save money right. So, I  
19 mean, I'm hoping there's no duplication between the  
20 citywide contract and what the agencies are doing.  
21 Not review I'm sure but there may be others. And  
22 then I'm trying to figure out, do we have to pay  
23 somebody at the last minute for a contract to  
24 translate because we didn't get organized enough to  
25 have a retaining? I don't know, I'm just asking.

1  
2 MANUEL CASTRO: So, we'll just say that MOIA is  
3 always at the ready to support whenever these issues  
4 come up and we can help determine which agency might  
5 be best equipped to hold this translation, or we  
6 could do it ourselves. It just depends.

7 So, for instance, in case of emergency  
8 situations, we often step in and support. For  
9 instance, with the Bronx fire earlier in the year or  
10 currently with the asylum seekers. You know, we take  
11 on you know wherever we need to feel gaps but  
12 certainly, you know when it's a health concern for  
13 instance, DOHMH will step in and take that on.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I just wanted to uhm, to  
16 DCWP, you know advocates and so many of us fought  
17 really hard to remove enforcement away from NYPD to  
18 DCWP. So, I just want to make a push and encourage  
19 the department to beef-up the educational materials,  
20 the outreach, uhm, and really rely on the community  
21 advocates and the folks who have been pushing for  
22 this from the very beginning, so that our  
23 microbusinesses are not accosted and fined  
24 inappropriately unjustly and that they really  
25 understand the services available. What to do, what

1  
2 not to do and I know the Street Vendor Project is  
3 putting together a package of legislation that we'll  
4 be pushing for in the coming weeks and months. But  
5 really just wanted to make that push as I have you  
6 here face to face.

7 CARLOS ORTIZ: Yeah, thank you Council Member.  
8 Certainly, with respect to Street Vendors and all our  
9 Brick and Morter businesses, education is a key  
10 component of creating a culture of compliance and it  
11 is fundamental with the work that we do. To  
12 ultimately ensure that consumers and workers are  
13 protected in New York City, which our agency is our  
14 number one priority.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. I just want to also  
17 welcome Council Member Cabàn. Also, I believe OATH  
18 has an updated response.

19 JOHN CASTELLI: I want to - I misspoke earlier  
20 regarding the appeals question. Oh, thank you. I  
21 misspoke earlier regarding the appeals question. The  
22 translation that we do is for when a small business  
23 owner submits the submission in a language other than  
24 English, we will translate that. Not the final or  
25 appeal decision. And we do look forward to your

1  
2 bill, which would have that final or final decision  
3 in another, in a language of preference.

4 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you for sharing that.  
5 So, no, it's great that you actually translate and  
6 appeal that in a language other than English is what  
7 you're answer is.

8 JOHN CASTELLI: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Great, thank you so much.

10 JOHN CASTELLI: Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chairs. We'll now  
12 turn to public testimony.

13 KEVIN KIM: Thank you so much.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will be limiting public  
15 testimony today to two minutes each. For each in-  
16 person panelist, please come up to the table once  
17 your name has been called. For virtual panelists,  
18 once your name is called, a member of our staff will  
19 unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms will set the  
20 timer and give you the go ahead to begin.

21 Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that you  
22 may begin before delivering your testimony. Our  
23 first panel today will include Hashina Sumi, Li Yang  
24 Li Yang, Fatima Mazumdar, and Zua Tao. Please make  
25 your way up to the table.

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 127

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

SERGEAT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

SHEILA ACTAR: Good morning everyone. My name is Sheila Actar (SP?), and I am a member of New York City Chapter of – the New York City Chapter of Asian Women’s Organization NAPAWF, also known as the National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum.

I’m writing this testimony on behalf of the bill number 0570-2022, which will allow the establishment of an office of translation and interpretation within the Office of Immigrant Affairs.

As a child of Bangladeshi immigrants, I have had first hand experience in witnessing and enduring the indirect, as well as the direct causes of the lack of language access in New York City. Growing up, my siblings and I would take turns missing school, we can be our parents translators. We had to accompany our dad to civil court, so we can win against our negligent landlord, take our parents to doctors appointments and even translate during parent teacher conference, whether it was our own report card or a siblings report card.

At the time, we never thought much of it as we believed we were helping our parents and our family. The people that sacrificed their entire life for

1  
2 ours. But as we grew up, we realized how fast we had  
3 to face reality as we were forced to learn about  
4 things we should not have to worry about as young  
5 children. We were given adult responsibilities, such  
6 as filing lawsuits, writing checks for our rent and  
7 utilities, translating for our parents when they were  
8 buying a house, with the fear that if we were to make  
9 a mistake, the fault would fall onto our shoulders,  
10 even though we were just kids.

11 Now, the Bengali community has grown immensely in  
12 areas such as Kensington and Ozone Park, causing  
13 Bangla to be one of the top languages in New York  
14 City. However, behind the prospering Bangladeshi  
15 community, there is still a lingering issue that has  
16 yet to change. The lack of language access for these  
17 Bengali immigrants. As a canvasser in our Bangla  
18 team in Kensington Brooklyn, which is another  
19 predominant Bengali neighborhood, we have  
20 communicated with hundreds of Bengali women about the  
21 barriers that are presented to them -

22 CHAIRPERSON UNG: You can keep going.

23 SHEILA ACTAR: Oh, okay, thank you. We have  
24 communicated with hundreds of Bengali women about the  
25 barriers that are presented to them when they try to



1  
2 obtain governmental assistance such as SNAP benefits  
3 and rent relief. We notice that the main reason for  
4 this is there is a lack of resources that are  
5 presented to Bangla, in Bangla sorry. Instead, being  
6 written in English. As [INAUDIBLE 2:33:03] in  
7 Bangla, it was often incorrect to the point it could  
8 not be deciphered.

9 This prevents a large majority of the population  
10 that needs these benefits to be unintentionally  
11 excluded from hearing about this valuable  
12 information. Hence, the passing of bill number 0570-  
13 2022 is extremely crucial in catalyzing the change  
14 that is necessary for language access.

15 By establishing an office of translation and  
16 interpretation within the Office of Immigrant  
17 Affairs, non-English speakers will be able to receive  
18 the assistance they need without obtaining the wrong  
19 information and communicate with individuals that are  
20 proficient in their languages. Thank you.

21 FATIMA MAZUMDAR: Uhm, hi, my name Fatima  
22 Mazumdar(SP?) and I'm a part of the National Asian  
23 Pacific Americans Women's Forum or NAPAWF here in New  
24 York City. The bill that I'm supporting is 0570-2022  
25 regarding the establishment of the Office of

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 130

1  
2 Translation and Interpretation within the Office of  
3 Immigrant Affairs.

4       Imagine going home, knowing you did not get the  
5 job because you did not speak or understand English.  
6 Imagine getting ridiculed because you have not  
7 learned the language of the country you just  
8 immigrated to. Imagine language being the biggest  
9 barrier in accessing governmental assistance to help  
10 bring food to the table and finding a home to live in  
11 for you and your family. This is what many of the  
12 millions of immigrants have to constantly face in New  
13 York City.

14       I'm a Bangladeshi immigrant and I'm the daughter  
15 of Bangladeshi immigrants. Being unable to  
16 understand English and the lack of translational  
17 services have also affected my family, especially for  
18 my mom. When we first immigrated, she spent so much  
19 time trying to find someone in the community who  
20 could understand English and translate it in Bangla.  
21 Because everything from important documents to basic  
22 resources were in English.

23       Today, when she doesn't understand something in  
24 English, my role is to be that bridge to help her  
25 understand. Often times, like me, many children of

1  
2 immigrant parents have to fulfill this role to help  
3 their parents understand and access their resources  
4 that should be easily available for them.

5 This can be hard because most times we as young  
6 adults are juggling many things in life and feel  
7 burdened having to find the time to translate these  
8 very resources that should be known, regardless of  
9 the language we speak.

10 It's hard to hear our parents say, "I'm sorry. I  
11 also feel embarrassed that I don't understand  
12 English." Being a part of NAPAWF allowed me to  
13 realize this is a story shared by many immigrants.  
14 Canvassing, hosting listening sessions with Aunties  
15 or having an unexpected chat in the Kensington  
16 community expose us to the struggles that immigrant  
17 parents and grandparents face by the same society  
18 they have contributed so much to. Many women with  
19 tears filling their eyes, speak about the lack of  
20 resources offered in their languages.

21 In almost every story, the lack of services  
22 offered in various languages poses a barrier in  
23 accessing the benefits that can ease many of the  
24 hardship in their lives. This city is the melting  
25 pot of different languages and different cultures and

1  
2 what language you speak should not prevent you from  
3 knowing the very benefits and assistance programs  
4 that are supposed to be for you.

5 This is why I'm supporting this bill. It is the  
6 recognition and the voice that many immigrant  
7 families yearn for for many years. When we talk  
8 about our country, for the people and by the people,  
9 the passage of this bill is one of the many steps to  
10 do so. Your language should be an asset, not a  
11 burden. Thank you for this opportunity to be here  
12 representing my community and sharing my story.

13 HASHINA SUMI: Hello everyone, my name is Hashina  
14 Sumi. I am part of NAPAWF, National Asian Pacific  
15 American Women's Forum. An organization geared to  
16 helping the rights of many underprivileged women.

17 Today, I am here supporting the bill 0570-2022.  
18 I am here to show my support in regards to the  
19 establishment of an Office of Translation and  
20 Interpretation within the Office of Immigrant  
21 Affairs.

22 Growing up as a first generation of Bangladeshi  
23 immigrant parents, I have seen my parents struggle a  
24 lot. Whether it be to get a job they are well  
25 qualified for or obtaining government benefits. They

1  
2 struggle because of the inability to understand many  
3 documents written in English in addition to services  
4 that were not provided in their language.

5       During the pandemic, as everyone was applying for  
6 unemployment, my parents also had lost their job.

7 But because they were unable to understand the  
8 documents, they had difficulty applying. As their  
9 daughter, I was happy to help my parents with the  
10 application process, however, I thought to myself,  
11 why is it that it is so hard to apply for government  
12 benefits for my parents? Is this all because they  
13 cannot speak and read English that well?

14       Being a part of NAPAWF and canvassing in the  
15 community of Kensington, also known as uhm, as Little  
16 Bangladesh, many Bengali women have expressed their  
17 concern similar to that of my parents. They were not  
18 able to apply for government benefits such as SNAP,  
19 rent relief, unemployment, all because they were  
20 unable to comprehend the documents given.

21       Often times, these documents also had many errors  
22 written within them because they were translated by  
23 online translation services. This in turn effects  
24 the understanding of such crucial information. Time  
25 and time again, we see the effects that the barrier

1  
2 to accessing services in one's language poses. By  
3 passing the 057 bill, we can finally bring about  
4 change to accessing necessary resources in our  
5 language. And thank you everybody for your time.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much. This is  
7 such an inspiring panel. Just shout out to NAPAWF  
8 and thank you for supporting my bill, Intro. 570.  
9 So, I appreciate just how thoughtfully you've  
10 articulated the pains of language and accessibility  
11 and you know what it does to families like ours. And  
12 it creates a cycle of abandonment. It shows to our  
13 families, our communities, that the city just simply  
14 does not care about us, and it puts the onus on us,  
15 daughters primarily to fulfill this gap.

16 I too, am a daughter of Bangladeshi immigrants.  
17 I was born and raised in Kensington and understand  
18 just what that cycle looks like having to interpret  
19 in PTA meetings or in parent - in the like report  
20 card meetings. And all sorts of other meetings when  
21 my sibling would get into school for discipline or  
22 any other things. Like, needing to really understand  
23 the system but also recognizing the vast limitations  
24 of the system that just was never built with us in  
25 mind to care for us in any capacity.

1  
2       And for me, the work in terms of where I've  
3 landed right now as a legislator, the catalyst to my  
4 coming into this work was language access. It was  
5 through my own diagnosis of Lupus and then seeing  
6 much more personally how our hospital system and this  
7 is 15 years ago. How our hospital system is  
8 incapable of really supporting immigrant families as  
9 they navigate the already complex. It's complex in  
10 respective of language Healthcare system. And then  
11 needing to travel across the city for care, landing  
12 you know work and uh, figuring out my education stuff  
13 and keeping my community abreast as to what was going  
14 on with me because I deeply believe that the onus  
15 will continue to be on us to create an ecosystem  
16 where we're prepared to share out information that's  
17 coming our way when emergencies happen.

18       And so, your feedback on this legislation is key.  
19 I know and I've seen the work that you're doing on  
20 the ground, and I applaud that work and I really  
21 applaud your generation because I was a 16, 17-year-  
22 old when I got involved in the fight for language  
23 access and I got involved with CAV organizing public  
24 housing residents to improve language access across  
25 NYCHA.

1  
2       So, this fight and the ripple affect is very  
3 encouraging to me and one of the things that it also  
4 pushed me to do as I was fighting the city to do  
5 better, and you know now we've got some legislation  
6 here that we are trying to pass to improve language  
7 access services upon the city. But the other  
8 fundamental piece for me was to ensure that those of  
9 us who are first generation are also becoming experts  
10 in our language, so that we as MOIA presented, this  
11 sector that will now be available for language access  
12 specialists. That this should be paid work. This  
13 should be work that requires a level of competency  
14 and not just because I speak the language, should I  
15 become a translator or interpreter but that these are  
16 skills that we need to advance in our communities.

17       And so, I encourage you to hone your own skills  
18 as you do this fight because it's going to require us  
19 to speak in our languages. It's going to continue to  
20 be our secret weapon as we organize all the Aunties  
21 in our communities across so many issues beyond  
22 language access. And so, thank you for being here  
23 and I'm looking forward to connecting with you  
24 separately to really win this fight because our  
25



1  
2 communities are on the line and our communities lives  
3 are on the line.

4 So, thank you again. Just deep, deep gratitude  
5 that you've showed up and you're showing up for our  
6 communities. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: I just wanted to also thank  
8 you. I thought it was great that you took the time  
9 to come here today and tell your story. I'm also the  
10 daughter of an immigrant and with my mother and  
11 grandmother came here from Hungary and I had to  
12 interact with the government. Let's just say, not a  
13 lot of government forms are in Hungarian or any  
14 information in Hungarian. And so, I deeply  
15 appreciate your personal story. So, thank you for  
16 taking the time.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I think we have one more  
18 panelist from the first panel, if you'd like to come  
19 up now.

20 LILY LIANG: Hello, my name is Lily Liang. I am  
21 the NYC Organizer of NAPAWF, National Asian Pacific  
22 American Women's Forum. This is my team.

23 I am here to support all bills, NYC translation  
24 services, especially Council Member Shahana Hanif's  
25 bill 0570-2022. As an organization who does

1  
2 chemistry on the ground, we have first hand knowledge  
3 of how the immigrants struggled with language access.

4 We can tell that since the passage of Local Law  
5 30, that translation services has not been functional  
6 provided by the NYC government. To give you an  
7 example, we identified 48 places of translation  
8 errors, translation uh of translation, idiomatic  
9 problems or worse, or grammar mistakes in this  
10 Chinese page of HRA's home page. Which I brought  
11 like 15 copies, and we can distribute it to the  
12 Council.

13 So, we also give the documentation of translation  
14 of HRA's Bengali pages to show words the Director of  
15 Language Access at the DSS on July 1<sup>st</sup>. So, why  
16 could this happen? The NYC COP tool contractors  
17 translation services, uh, [INAUDIBLE 2:46:06] or at  
18 work case, using software to translate, basically  
19 Google translate. This is the screenshot of their  
20 web pages. Saying that they use software to  
21 translate

22 So, uhm, based on Comptroller's checkbook,  
23 checkbooknyc.com, NYC's been beat with language line,  
24 the biggest contractor. The agency were not able to

1  
2 answer question on the amount. I can tell you, its  
3 totaled \$140 million.

4 With translation contracts alone, uh, it totaled  
5 \$37 million with \$22 million to spend until 2025.

6 Contracts on translation and interpretations alone  
7 are \$12 million. Contracts interpretations are \$90  
8 million with \$49 million to spend. Based on the  
9 eligibility of the government, the website, we don't  
10 see the difference of these contractors with Google  
11 Translate.

12 So, if the government just has to use Google  
13 software to translate to cut down cost, use Google  
14 translate for free. And the money spent on  
15 translation services to New York based human  
16 translators who are otherwise employed bilingual  
17 immigrants, to check on the translated materials for  
18 errors and the corrections and to the CBO's who are  
19 in-language provider for immigrants to access  
20 government services programs and information.

21 So, we know that the Council has power to put the  
22 government on that path. This is the paper copies,  
23 if you need it and I'll also electronically submit my  
24 testimony and the supporting documents. Thank you.

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 140

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and the last person  
3 on this panelist was Zua Tao.

4 ZUA TAO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:48:44-  
5 2:48:49].

6 INTERPRETER: Respectful New York City Officer,  
7 how are you?

8 ZUA TAO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:49:02-  
9 2:49:04].

10 INTERPRETER: My name is Zua Tao.

11 ZUA TAO: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:49:07-  
12 2:49:09].

13 INTERPRETER: I live in Flushing. My age is 65.  
14 I am the member of National Asian Pacific and  
15 American Women's Forum. Today, I come over here for  
16 New York translation service the discussion point for  
17 identify, especially the case number is 0570-2022.

18 I am an immigrant to another state in 2005. My  
19 son in his younger age has brain damage and now is a  
20 very, very low in IQ. I and my husband work very  
21 hard and to bring up the children. And my husband  
22 passed away due to overwork. I am taking over to  
23 bring up my child's heavy responsibility.

24 When I have to go to work, my son just wonder  
25 around the street when he was hungry, and he doesn't

1  
2 know how to use money to buy food. I am trying to  
3 get his child welfare because I don't have free  
4 interpreting. I'm running through all kinds of  
5 organizations within two years.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Sir, could we have the  
7 testifier to just read her statement.

8 INTERPRETER: Yes. I was cheated for \$200.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Excuse me, instead of  
10 interpreting the English, could you have her read it  
11 in the language that she wrote it in? She can say it  
12 in Chinese and then once she's completed, you can  
13 summarize.

14 INTERPRETER: You mean after she read in Chinese?

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah.

16 INTERPRETER: Okay.

17 ZUA TAO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:52:40-  
18 2:52:45.

19 INTERPRETER: Then the newspaper, the -

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: It doesn't have to be line by  
21 line. Can she just read her statement?

22 INTERPRETER: Okay. SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE  
23 2:52:58]. Then the reporter from the Chinese  
24 Newspaper saw my son.  
25

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 142

1  
2 ZUA TAO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:53:04-  
3 2:53:07].

4 INTERPRETER: Then we made our newspaper report  
5 regarding to my saturation.

6 ZUA TAO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:53:18-  
7 2:53:20].

8 INTERPRETER: This is the reporting from the  
9 Chinese newspaper right here.

10 ZUA TAO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:53:29-  
11 2:53:37].

12 INTERPRETER: Then the congressman [INAUDIBLE  
13 2:53:42] and office get in touch, helped me to get in  
14 touch for New York organization.

15 ZUA TAO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:53:58-  
16 2:54:00].

17 INTERPRETER: Okay, the WASA in English is  
18 Chinese American Planning Council.

19 ZUA TAO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:54:08-  
20 2:54:13].

21 INTERPRETER: At last, I applied for the  
22 disability benefit subsidy. I appreciate the  
23 American government and -

24 ZUA TAO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:54:29-  
25 2:54:35].

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 143

1  
2 INTERPRETER: I'm deeply, deeply appreciate,  
3 grateful American government and New York City's  
4 welfare policy.

5 ZUA TAO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:54:48-  
6 2:54:56].

7 INTERPRETER: And I'm deeply touched with the  
8 Chinese American Planning Council, Council's help.

9 ZUA TAO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:55:10-  
10 2:5517].

11 INTERPRETER: I hope the city can provide much  
12 better Chinese interpreting service.

13 ZUA TAO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:55:29-  
14 2:55:35] to provide financial help for the local  
15 Chinese organization to provide help for the people  
16 like me.

17 ZUA TAO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:55:52-  
18 2:55:56].

19 INTERPRETER: To assist the family situation like  
20 mine.

21 ZUA TAO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:56:00-  
22 2:56:02].

23 INTERPRETER: Help us to blend in to this great  
24 society easily.

25 ZUA TAO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:56:09.

1  
2 INTERPRETER: And thank you. This is the paper  
3 from Chinese.

4 ZUA TAO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:56:20.

5 INTERPRETER: I finished my statement.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much. We really  
7 appreciate that you've testified and articulated some  
8 of the pains of not being able to access language  
9 services. If you'd like to leave us with any  
10 documents or your testimony, feel free to send them  
11 over to us and I just want to point out, I think what  
12 we just witnessed right now is a real picture of how  
13 incredibly difficult it is to do either simultaneous  
14 or consecutive interpretation.

15 And I'm getting better. I'll be checking in with  
16 just like the Council's approach in terms of how we  
17 onboard interpretation but usually what we prefer is  
18 for the person who's testifying to testify in their  
19 language of comfort and there has to be communication  
20 between the interpreter and the speaker in terms of  
21 what they prefer, whether that's consecutive or  
22 simultaneous.

23 But, just a real-life picture of how incredibly  
24 difficult and challenging it is to interpret from  
25 another language to English because of context,



1  
2 verbiage and so much more. But thank you again for  
3 testifying and thank you to our interpreter for the  
4 interpretation.

5 ZUA TAO: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:57:51-  
6 2:58:24].

7 INTERPRETER: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:58:29-  
8 2:58:37.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear  
10 from our second panel, which will include Ravi Reddi,  
11 Aracelis Lucero and Urgen Sherpa, you may make your  
12 way up to the table now. And if each panelist could  
13 just state their name before they start their  
14 testimony. Thanks.

15 RAVI REDDI: Ravi Reddi and do I just start?  
16 This is my first time actually doing it in person.  
17 Alright.

18 Well, thank you so much for having us Committee  
19 Chairs Menin, Hanif and Chairwoman Ung, as well as  
20 Members of the Council Committees here. I'm Ravi  
21 Reddi, the Associate Director of Advocacy and Policy  
22 at the Asian American Federation. We represent the  
23 collective voice of more than 70 member nonprofits,  
24 serving 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers.

1  
2       So, I'm just going to cut right to the chase  
3 instead of doing my debate speed reading. When it  
4 comes to language access in our small business  
5 community first, here's what we have to say on the  
6 several bills being discussed. When it comes to  
7 Intro. 685 by Councilwoman Menin, we are supportive  
8 and excited by this bill. We just have a couple of  
9 questions on implementation and how it will  
10 incorporate and prioritize the organizations that are  
11 already doing this kind of work.

12       You know we have our small business team that is  
13 doing a lot of this technical assistance in capacity  
14 building work. So, our question is just how can this  
15 office utilize the experts already on the ground  
16 doing this work? And so, we're excited to have that  
17 conversation. Excited to see where that goes.  
18 Excited to see the potential.

19       When it comes to Intro. 699, by Councilwoman Ung,  
20 this bill has our support, especially the language  
21 access enhancement section. We're ready to have  
22 conversations regarding how this could be implemented  
23 to center organizations already doing this work. But  
24 we are excited to see that our small business are  
25 being heard. It's something our team has been

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 147

1  
2 dealing with on a one-on-one basis daily. So, we're  
3 excited to see that this is a priority at Council.  
4 And as always, our questions will be deferred to when  
5 we talk about implementation. When it comes to  
6 Intro. 382 by Brewer, again, this just get that a  
7 very simple need, language access in every fashion  
8 that our community members needed. This is first and  
9 foremost. They need to know if they're being  
10 penalized or there are summons. It helps to have it  
11 in their language. That just makes intuitive sense  
12 and more often than not, our small businesses have  
13 been paying a serious price just for the lack of this  
14 simple fix.

15 Just very quickly, uhm, Council Member Hanif's  
16 Intro. 570 takes important steps in recognizing the  
17 city's fundamental purpose and overseeing language  
18 access work in the most diverse city in the world.  
19 To that end, we would like to see this bill focus on  
20 oversight purposes that MOIA is equipped for. But  
21 we'd also like to discuss how this work fits jointly  
22 with the victory that you discussed. The \$5 million  
23 for the community interpreter bank and the worker co-  
24 ops. There are plenty of ways, plenty of  
25 possibilities for how both of these can be duck

1  
2 tailed together but you know MOIA doing its  
3 oversight, that was kind of top of mind when we read  
4 that bill, but the possibilities are, we're excited  
5 to talk more about that.

6 So, again, instead of stuttering my way through,  
7 just thank you so much for having us. Thank you so  
8 much for holding this hearing. It's always exciting  
9 when we get to talk about pretty much, this is how we  
10 start every conversation when it comes to language  
11 access. Thank you.

12 ARACELIS LUCERO: Hi, good afternoon. I want to  
13 thank everybody for holding this very special  
14 hearing. I think language access is like, especially  
15 for immigrant communities, very near and dear to our  
16 heart. So, really thankful for this opportunity. My  
17 name is Aracelis Lucero, I am the Executive Director  
18 of MASA. A community-based organization in the South  
19 Bronx. That for the past two decades has worked with  
20 immigrants, especially recently arrived immigrants in  
21 indigenous speaking communities and providing them  
22 with critical services around education, wrap around  
23 family support services and opportunities to advocate  
24 for policies and issues that will dismantle the

1  
2 systems of oppression, so that they can live a life  
3 full of dignity and respect in this city.

4 MASA, in collaboration with the New York  
5 Immigration Coalition, Asian American Federation and  
6 African communities together, continue to focus on  
7 addressing issues around language access and  
8 advocating for more culturally competent interpreters  
9 and translators who are sensitive to the needs and  
10 can provide the level of support that our community  
11 members require.

12 As such, MASA is pleased to support the language  
13 access bills being introduced today and especially  
14 would like to highlight Intro. 137, which requires  
15 agencies to translate and distribute to CBO's,  
16 emergency information in a designated citywide  
17 languages. As well as Intro. 697, which will  
18 requires city agencies to provide language access  
19 services to all specialty languages that are not  
20 included in the Language Access Law in times of  
21 global crisis and emergency response.

22 MASA serves many community members that speak  
23 indigenous languages, and we fully understand the  
24 barriers faced by communities that speak languages of  
25 limited diffusion. As 35 percent of the people

1 receive services at MASA, speak an indigenous  
2 language and have difficulty accessing resources in  
3 New York City. New York City especially as we saw  
4 during the global pandemic.  
5

6 In addition, we would also like to share with you  
7 some of our recommendations based on our years of  
8 interaction with community members, who are largely  
9 affected by the lack of language access and  
10 navigation services in their native languages.

11 I think as we heard today; I'm going to try to  
12 speed up. Many of the families that we serve are  
13 navigating a complex of systems and institutions in  
14 unfamiliar language and often with limited literacy  
15 in their primary language and very limited, sometimes  
16 non-existent digital literacy skills.

17 In general, what we are seeing is that different  
18 communities may require different things and as we  
19 witnessed today, it's not just sometimes language  
20 barriers but also the way that these services are  
21 being delivered.

22 Uhm, this leads us to our second point, which is  
23 highlighting the need for more humane and  
24 compassionate approach in delivering information,  
25

1 interpretation and translation services for non-  
2 English speaking communities.  
3

4 As part of our language access campaign, we have  
5 been speaking to hundreds of indigenous speaking  
6 community members on key challenges and accessing  
7 adequate language access services through extensive  
8 surveys. 100 percent of our respondents believe that  
9 there is a need for better and improved  
10 interpretation services in American indigenous  
11 languages across New York City sectors. 95 percent  
12 of respondents express that these services are  
13 primarily needed in the healthcare system. 68  
14 percent in the education system and 58 percent in the  
15 court system.

16 I will submit testimony with two stories that I  
17 think you guys should hear. I don't want to abuse my  
18 time but in particular, what we found is that  
19 there's an overwhelming instance of dismissive  
20 behavior, particularly in the Healthcare system and  
21 that discrimination towards indigenous speaking  
22 communities from healthcare professional.

23 Following interactions with healthcare providers,  
24 many community members were hesitant to seek  
25 healthcare in the future due to fear that their

1  
2 healthcare needs would be ignored because of language  
3 barriers as they had in the past.

4 In addition, we have found that non-English  
5 speakers are not able to access resources in a timely  
6 matter, as it takes longer for them to schedule  
7 appointments or get basic information on services due  
8 to lack of fast interpretation services. So, I have  
9 two testimonies that I would have loved to share but  
10 I want to be respectful of everybody's time and I  
11 will submit them in the written record. Thank you  
12 very much for having me.

13 URGEN SHERPA: Okay. Dear Committee Chairs and  
14 Committee Members. I'm here to support these bills  
15 for language access. My name is Urgen Sherpa, and I  
16 work at Chhaya Community Development Corporation as  
17 the Small Business Organizer. Chhaya bears the power  
18 housing stability and economy of well-being of South  
19 Asian and inter-Caribbean communities in New York  
20 City.

21 I would like to start by thanking this joint  
22 community for allowing me to testify today. Today,  
23 we have a real opportunity to support the small  
24 businesses that fuel our local economy and create a  
25 more inclusive and fairer city.



1  
2 New York City is one of the most linguistically  
3 diverse cities on the planet. Our small business  
4 community is largely made up of immigrant small  
5 business owners. Many of these small business owners  
6 are not English proficient. These people are  
7 important community members who deserve their dignity  
8 of being recognized by their local government.

9 When discussing translation services, we are  
10 asking each other to work [INAUDIBLE 3:08:03] of New  
11 Yorkers apart of our community and worthy of the  
12 resources of government provides.

13 This may seem like minor administrative detail  
14 but when people aren't afforded resources, they can  
15 understand that means, they don't have access to  
16 these resources. In my role, I work with hundreds of  
17 small business owners, many of whom upgrade the  
18 business themselves every single day.

19 Consider a Bangla speaking couple running a small  
20 restaurant in Jackson Heights. They are up each  
21 morning at 7 a.m. Three hours before opening to  
22 start preparing for the days meals and still until 10  
23 p.m. cleaning and checking inventory after their  
24 restaurant closes.

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION

154

1  
2 Now, for a moment, imagine that they are visited  
3 by a health inspector who only speaks English. They  
4 have trouble communicating and the inspector is  
5 unaware of the restaurants HACCP plan or the staffs  
6 leveling system. This leads to a notice of violation  
7 for the business that also issued in English. The  
8 couples hour of the need to make improvements but  
9 somehow, outside of their busy 15-hour day, they have  
10 to find time for someone to help them and translate  
11 the content of the notice of violation and figure out  
12 how to communicate with the next inspector that  
13 visits them.

14 In a city where COVID-19 pandemic has closed too  
15 many small businesses and left so many other with  
16 crushing theft, we should be doing everything that we  
17 can to even the playing field. Every day I work with  
18 immigrant and small business owners who have trouble  
19 understanding the financial systems here. They  
20 struggle with rising rents and all the difficult  
21 struggles of small businesses.

22 Intro. 382 will ensure that on top of these  
23 challenges, understanding results of an inspection  
24 isn't added to the list. If Intro. 699 were in  
25 place, a Bangla speaking couple would be able to

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 155

1  
2 request an inspector who speaks their language, who  
3 could better understand what's happening at the  
4 business and explain violations and remedies.

5 Language justice is critical. Immigrant owned  
6 businesses are essential toward communities economy  
7 according to 2017 report written by the [INAUDIBLE  
8 3:10:43] for Neighborhood Housing and Development.

9 48 percent of NYC small businesses are immigrant  
10 owned and in some neighborhoods, small businesses  
11 employ up to 42 percent of the neighborhood  
12 population. Putting our immigrant owned small  
13 businesses at risk, not only with the livelihood of  
14 some of our hardest working community members but  
15 creates ripple effects throughout the neighborhoods  
16 and communities. Chhaya urges you to pass these  
17 bills in the spirit of creating a level playing field  
18 for business owners and in support of our local  
19 economies.

20 Intro. 137 is sponsored by Council Member Julie  
21 Won. Intro. 382 sponsored by Council Member Gale  
22 Brewer. Intro. 570 sponsored by Shahana Hanif.  
23 Intro. 697 sponsored by Council Member Sandra Ung.  
24 Intro. 699 sponsored by Council Member Sandra Ung.  
25 Intro. 700 sponsored by Council Member Julie Won.

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION

156

1  
2 By passing these bills, supporting language  
3 justice, we will be creating a more fair and  
4 inclusive economy that offers opportunities for more  
5 immigrants to start their own businesses and  
6 recognizes the dignity of every human being in the  
7 city. Thank you for your time and consideration.

8 TIENA WAGNAG: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGAUGE  
9 3:12:19] First, thank you for your time. I know  
10 hunger is starting to set in, so I do want to say  
11 thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is  
12 Tiena Wagnag(SP?), I am the Senior Manager of Local  
13 Policy and Legislation at the New York Immigration  
14 Coalition. And just to summarize and jump straight  
15 into the key point.

16 While we thank the Committee Chairs for putting  
17 forward this bill package, the work must continue.  
18 New York City took an important step with the passage  
19 of the language access policy Local Law 30. However,  
20 as we witness and see this every day, there are still  
21 barriers that remain for our LLD's population, and we  
22 see that this continues to effect those barriers  
23 throughout this epidemic.

24 So, also to build on recent achievement, we  
25 continue to propose that the Council support the

1  
2 creation of the community legal interpreter bank to  
3 expand language access and increase the supply of  
4 trained vetted immigration legal interpreters by  
5 committing funds through a City Council budget to be  
6 provided to a community-based nonprofit organization.

7 In addition, we are also proposing that the  
8 funding for the New York City Council's Workers  
9 Cooperative Business Development Initiative be  
10 increased to an immigrant community-based communities  
11 to develop and launch three language service worker  
12 owned cooperatives. One for African Languages of  
13 limited diffusion. One for Asian LLD's and one for  
14 indigenous Latin American LLD's.

15 Language just cannot be interpreted seamlessly  
16 from one end to the other. This process involves  
17 consistence training, robust research to collect  
18 information on languages in the various regional  
19 dialects creating a CLIB and worker cooperative will  
20 help provide the additional resources for not just  
21 individuals but even the city government, including  
22 particularly for MOIA, as they take on this new  
23 responsibility for overseeing the new Office of  
24 Translation and Interpretation. A great resource

1 that I'm sure that they will be able to find very  
2 useful.  
3

4 Another issue that must be addressed is the  
5 translation of local emergency notifications. Local  
6 Law 30 provides no allowance for the adjustment of  
7 documents most commonly distributed to the public  
8 that I translated for emergency purposes. And there  
9 is no specific on time table for when documents  
10 should be translated. And although the legislation  
11 put forward today would provide for the translation  
12 of any documents provided by the federal and state  
13 government, related to the declaration of emergency  
14 effecting the city, the bill does not include any  
15 adjustment or such adjustment. Nor does it dictate  
16 the time necessary in an emergency situation.

17 As we previously saw over the last few, it feels  
18 like decades but really has only been a few years of  
19 this pandemic, getting timely accurate and accessible  
20 information and services is a matter of life and  
21 death for individuals and a public health imperative  
22 for all of us.

23 And while we are focusing on a solution, we  
24 should not forget our immigrant adult learners.

25 There are 2.2 million people in New York City, one

1  
2 out of every three adults who are either lacking a  
3 high school diploma or have low English proficiency.

4 In support of these adult learners, we call on  
5 the City Council and the Mayor to restore all  
6 fundings for adult literacy program and to invest  
7 additional money over the next two years to fund a  
8 pilot program that will provide wrap around services  
9 to adult learners.

10 Once again, thank you for convening this  
11 extremely important hearing and allowing me to  
12 testify myself, the NYC, our entire organization and  
13 partners across New York City look forward to  
14 continue to work with you all to come up with  
15 solutions. Thank you for your time.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Great, thank you so much to  
17 this panel. We really appreciate your very  
18 thoughtful testimony and obviously, look forward to  
19 working with all of you in terms of your questions  
20 about implementation on the respective bills. I know  
21 we have a number of people who are interested in  
22 testifying on Zoom. So, CJ, I will turn it to you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. We'll now  
24 turn to a panel of Zoom panelists. I'll first be  
25 calling on Jeremy Laufer followed by Shaun Campbell

1  
2 and then Medha Ghosh. Jeremy Laufer, you may begin  
3 upon the Sergeants announcement.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Jeremy, you may need to  
6 accept our unmute request.

7 JEREMY LAUFER: Thank you. There was no request,  
8 but you did unmute me. Thank you. My name is Jeremy  
9 Laufer, I'm the District Manager for Community Board  
10 7. In the interest of brevity, I will skip around my  
11 testimony, but I encourage everybody to read it.

12 I do want to make the distinction though that we  
13 are an independent agency in New York City. We are  
14 not part of all agencies brought up by MOIA, so I  
15 will begin my testimony.

16 Brooklyn Community Board 7 believes the bear  
17 minimum required of us should be able to communicate  
18 with our constituents. The haphazard way this  
19 currently happens leaves many of our residents  
20 uninformed on important issues and potential life  
21 altering changes in our community.

22 I'd like to share two anecdotes that demonstrate  
23 the need for the proposed service described in Intro.  
24 570. In October of 2020, our board held a  
25 transportation committee meeting regarding DOT's



1  
2 proposal to change 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenues to one-way  
3 streets in three community districts. A meeting  
4 forced on them by an Article 78 lawsuit.

5 In our district, this area includes the heart of  
6 Brooklyn's China Town with many residents who are not  
7 proficient in English. Community Board 7 scrambled  
8 to get an organization to provide the technology to  
9 hold our first and to date only hybrid meeting. We  
10 asked DOT to provide interpretation services, so that  
11 we could properly communicate with the residents most  
12 affected by these proposed changes.

13 DOT let us know that they do not provide  
14 translation. The board found it unacceptable to fail  
15 to communicate with those most effected by the  
16 proposal and paid for a contractor to provide  
17 interpretation in Spanish and Chinese for a three-  
18 hour meeting. The \$900 cost represents at about five  
19 percent of the boards entire non-salary budget for  
20 the entire year for a single meeting.

21 Such costs are unsustainable for our tiny  
22 independent agency if we provided interpretation for  
23 every meeting we hold, which we believe should be the  
24 standard. Incidentally, DOT did not provide their  
25 presentation in any language other than English.

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION 162

1  
2 Just a few months later, the MTA asked us to hold  
3 a transportation committee meeting on adding  
4 elevators to the 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue Subway Station.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 JEREMY LAUFER: Again, in the heart of Brooklyn's  
7 China Town. Again, we asked the agency to provide  
8 interpretation services and we were once again told  
9 that this service would fall to us in our minuscule  
10 budget.

11 To put that another way, a \$50 billion agency  
12 asked a quarter million-dollar agency to provide a  
13 platform for their community outreach and told us it  
14 was up to us to figure out how to communicate to the  
15 people they wanted to reach.

16 As that meeting was towards the end of the Fiscal  
17 Year, we no longer had enough funds to pay for a  
18 contractor and had to rely on community volunteers  
19 who were unfamiliar with the acronyms and technical  
20 terms used by the agency.

21 While volunteers can be a stop gap, there is no  
22 quality control and our lack of knowledge of the  
23 language leaves us vulnerable to someone  
24 propagandizing an issue in their interpretation.  
25

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION

163

1  
2       Community Board 7 believes a budget increase for  
3 community boards, while desperately needed for a  
4 variety of reasons, should not be the city's sole  
5 answer to this need, as Ms. Campbell's testimony and  
6 my testimonies will demonstrate that different boards  
7 have different interpretation and translation needs.

8       A simple budget increase for these services  
9 penalizes those with greater need for these services,  
10 as boards can use these fungible assets for other  
11 purposes. Those with greater need would not be  
12 afforded such a luxury.

13       Our board has had the opportunity to read and  
14 question Council Member Hanif's staff on Intro. 570  
15 and voted 41 to noting in favor of the legislation,  
16 while also calling on the Council and the Mayor to  
17 fully fund the service.

18       This legislation will greatly enhance our  
19 abilities to communicate with our constituents,  
20 provide opportunities for marginalized populations to  
21 weigh in on community issues and share their needs  
22 and interests with the city, and with the larger  
23 community in a way that does has not been provided  
24 uniformly in the past and would make the city a  
25

1  
2 fairer place to live and work no matter what language  
3 you speak. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we'll hear  
5 from Shawn Campbell followed by Medha Ghosh and then  
6 Lorena Crusius (SP?). Shaun Campbell, you may begin  
7 upon the Sergeants announcement.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

9 SHAUN CAMPBELL: Thank you very much. Thank you  
10 Committee Chairs and members. I also want to thank  
11 my colleague Jeremy Laufer, I'm very glad to be  
12 testifying in tandem with Community Board 7.

13 Jeremy's provided a great deal of support among  
14 Brooklyn Community Boards, as well as with the  
15 citywide working group future of Community Boards on  
16 this issue. This testimony is to provide support for  
17 Intro. 570, although there certainly have been - all  
18 of the other Intro.'s are also laudable and support  
19 worthy.

20 But as the most local city agency in the City of  
21 New York, it is extraordinarily important that  
22 Community Boards offer language access. In Community  
23 District 14, nearly 50 percent of our residents are  
24 foreign born and nearly 25 percent self-identify as  
25 having limited English proficiency.

1           The language needs are extremely diverse in our  
2 community, where over 30 first languages are  
3 represented in one of our local elementary school.  
4 However, Community Boards are one of the very few  
5 city agencies that have not had significant budget  
6 increases in the past 25 years and as of today, I am  
7 the only full-time staff member on this board. We  
8 have had similar stories and hurdles that were  
9 articulated by my colleague Mr. Laufer a moment ago  
10 and in order to translate meeting notices, public  
11 hearing notices, agendas, event notices, websites and  
12 newsletters, and then to provide interpretation at  
13 those meetings, hearings and events, Community Boards  
14 must have access to city resources. Including,  
15 although not exclusively a baseline budget increase.  
16 It's important to note that language needs do vary  
17 from Community District to Community districts. Some  
18 districts have a higher percentage of people in need  
19 of language access services. Others might have a  
20 smaller percentage but a more diverse set of  
21 languages.  
22

23           It is encouraging that all of these Intro.'s are  
24 pending before City Council right now. It does  
25 demonstrate that City Council values the need to

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION

166

1  
2 increase language access. And as recognize the  
3 importance of access -

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 SHAWN CAMPBELL: When it comes to voting and when  
6 it comes to various enforcement efforts. Surely  
7 providing New Yorkers their most local government  
8 office language access services and support is a  
9 priority. Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we'll be  
11 hearing Medha Ghosh followed by Lorena Crusius.  
12 Medha Ghosh, you may begin when the Sergeant calls  
13 time.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

15 MEDHA GHOSH: Good afternoon. My name is Medha  
16 Ghosh, and I am the Health Policy Coordinator at  
17 CACF, the Coalition for Asian American Children and  
18 Families. Thank you very much to Chair Hanif, Menin  
19 and Ung, for holding this hearing and providing this  
20 opportunity to testify.

21 Found in 1986, CACF was the Asians only Pan-Asian  
22 Children and Families Advocacy Organization and leads  
23 the fight for improving equitable policies, systems,  
24 funding and services to support those in need.

25

1  
2 Language barriers are a huge obstacle faced by  
3 many folks in immigrant communities and especially in  
4 the API community. In New York City, the API  
5 community has the highest rate of linguistic  
6 isolation of any group. As 46 percent have LEP,  
7 meaning that they speak English less than very well  
8 according to a more recent study from the New York  
9 City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

10 Moreover, more than two and three agencies in NYC are  
11 LEP and approximately 49 percent of all immigrants in  
12 NYC are LEP.

13 Language barriers can prevent folks from  
14 accessing vital services like healthcare. Despite  
15 there being 76 language access policies targeting  
16 healthcare settings in New York, we have found that  
17 many LEP patients still report facing difficulties  
18 like being unable to find an interpreter that speaks  
19 their dialect or being unable to fill out paperwork  
20 because a translated version in their language does  
21 not exist.

22 A language of linguistically sensible services in  
23 healthcare settings can have grave consequences. 50  
24 percent of adverse events that occurred to LEP  
25 patients in US hospitals were likely the result of

1  
2 communication errors. And nearly half of these  
3 events involved some form of physical harm.

4 In response to the CACF campaign, loss in  
5 translation aims to ensure that New Yorkers have  
6 equitable access to linguistically and culturally  
7 responsive healthcare services. Over the past two  
8 years CACF conducted quantitative and qualitative  
9 research to identify the key barriers that LEP New  
10 Yorkers face in healthcare settings and identify  
11 corresponding recommendations.

12 For this campaign, we conducted a focus group of  
13 patient navigators who better understand the  
14 experiences of LEP patients. One navigator stated a  
15 child was asked by a doctor to interpret for his  
16 mother. The doctor told the child that his mother  
17 had cancer and the child refused to tell her. The  
18 doctor continued to ask him to interpret, even though  
19 it was not his responsibility.

20 Putting the burden of interpretation of medical  
21 information on the child of a patient is beyond  
22 unacceptable. Language access also paramount for LEP  
23 families with children attending New York City public  
24 schools. During the pandemic, the DOE struggled to  
25 communicate with LEP families, often deprioritizing



1 translation of key policy announcements such as  
2 obtaining or troubleshooting devices and Wi-Fi, which  
3 often only took place after community-based  
4 organization intervened.  
5

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 MEDHA GHOSH: Policies were in English first and  
8 translation later on. Rather than concurrently  
9 meaning that LEP families had less time to understand  
10 adaptive changes, if they were even able to access  
11 translations.

12 I'll skip to the important part. As language  
13 access is a critical issue faced by many New Yorkers,  
14 CACF is in full support of Council Member Hanif's  
15 Intro. Bill 570, that would require the creation of  
16 an Office of Translation and Interpretation with an  
17 Office of Immigrant Affairs and improve local access  
18 quality of language services. In addition to Council  
19 Member Hanif's Intro. Bill 570, we are also in  
20 support of Council Member Brewer's Intro. Bill 382,  
21 Council Member Ung's Intro. Bill 697 and 699, as well  
22 as Council Member Menin's Intro. Bill 700.

23 Overall, we see a need for more intentional  
24 collaboration between the city and CBO's to better  
25 identify language access gaps in our communities and

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION

170

1  
2 to find and implement solutions that will have a  
3 direct, positive impact on the wellbeing of our  
4 communities. Thank you very much for our time.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I'll now call on  
6 Lorena Crusius. I believe that will be our last  
7 panelist, so if there's anyone on the Zoom who is  
8 waiting to testify, please use the Zoom raise hand  
9 function. If there's anyone here in person, please  
10 speak to the Sergeants. Lorena Crusius, you may  
11 begin when the Sergeant calls time.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lorena, you're unmuted but we  
14 cannot hear you. Unfortunately, we're not getting  
15 any audio from Lorena. Chairs, I don't see anyone  
16 else in the Zoom with a raised hand. I don't think  
17 we have anyone else in person who is signed up to  
18 testify, so I'll turn it over to you to close us out.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I just wanted to make sure  
20 that uhm, Medha gets us the lost in translation  
21 report, so that we can take a closer look. Thank you  
22 for testifying.

23

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date NOVEMBER 12, 2022