

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

23-73

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

May 7, 2019

To celebrate the 15th anniversary of the enactment of the Language Access Act of 2004 and the positive effects it has had on the District of Columbia and its residents.

WHEREAS, the District is home to over 35,000 residents who have limited proficiency in the English language;

WHEREAS, over 168 different languages are spoken across the District of Columbia;

WHEREAS, on February 3, 2003, the Language Access Act of 2003 was introduced by Councilmember Jim Graham and co-sponsored by Councilmembers Sandy Allen, Harold Brazil, Adrian Fenty, Phil Mendelson, and Carol Schwartz to eliminate linguistic barriers and ensure that all District residents, workers and visitors have equal access to local government services and programs, despite their English proficiency;

WHEREAS, on April 21, 2004, the Language Access Act of 2004 was enacted by Mayor Anthony A. Williams;

WHEREAS, on June 19, 2004, the Language Access Act of 2004 became effective law in the District of Columbia;

WHEREAS, the Language Access Act obligates the District government to provide equal access and participation in public services, programs, and activities for residents of the District of Columbia who cannot, or have limited capacity to, speak, read, or write English;

WHEREAS, the Language Access Act established an obligation on behalf of the District government to provide people with an English deficiency with free interpreter services, free access to vital documents in their preferred language, and the ability to make a complaint if denied any service at a District agency;

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WHEREAS, the Language Access Act requires these services to be available to any Limited English or non-English speaking population that makes up either 3% or 500 people of the population served or encountered;

WHEREAS, since the implementation of the Language Access Act, the District's Office of Human Rights has implemented a "Know Your Rights" campaign that has created Know Your Rights cards in six different languages outlining their right to assistance in their language and to eliminate language barriers;

WHEREAS, the limited English speaking and non-English speaking residents of the District of Columbia play a vital role in our city, whether it be owning local businesses or being involved in advocacy work and deserve the right to participate in our government and the Language Access Act has helped to ensure this; and

WHEREAS, the Language Access Act continues to provide greater accessibility and inclusion of the District's linguistically diverse communities.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "15th Anniversary of the Language Access Act of 2004 Ceremonial Recognition Resolution of 2019".

Sec. 2. The Council recognizes the diverse collection of cultures and languages that add to the beautiful fabric of the District of Columbia, and celebrates the tremendous success of the Language Access Act of 2004 for continuing to make the District more welcoming and accessible for all.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon the first date of publication in the District of Columbia Register.