

Offered by Councilor Michelle Wu



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING LANGUAGE ACCESS POLICY IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

WHEREAS: The Boston Census taken in 2012 showed about 36 percent of households in Boston speak a language other than English at home and 44 percent of Boston Public School students in the 2013-2014 school year don't speak English as their first language, representing 84 different languages and 142 different countries; And

WHEREAS: It is important that the city services offered in Boston are accessible to all of our residents including those who aren't English speakers; And

WHEREAS: There are lots of opportunities for assistance for non-English speakers, however they would benefit from greater awareness of these resources. For example, there are many multilingual employees working for the City of Boston whose services and feedback could be used to assist non-English speakers; And

WHEREAS: Other municipalities including San Francisco, Oakland, New York City, Chicago, and Washington D.C. already have language access laws and ordinances that require certain city agencies to have free, comprehensive language assistance services to those who are limited-English proficient. For example, San Francisco, much like the other cities, requires that each department have a designated translator, as well as ongoing employee development. Washington D.C. similarly created a Language Access Coalition which holds periodic public meetings and works with communities to resolve issues; And

WHEREAS: The Mayor's Office of New Bostonians, as well as other non-profits in the city are a great access point for non-English speakers and it is key that they be equipped with the necessary resources to best support their constituents; And

WHEREAS: Not all city departments have the staffing capacity and translated documents to be able to help those who need language access services in an efficient way; Now

THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED,

That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to discuss the language access resources and policies in the City of Boston and that representatives from the Mayor's Office of New Bostonians and other relevant agencies, and members of the public be invited to attend and testify.

Filed on: August 20, 2014