BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

MAYOR'S FORUM ON THE D.C. LANGUAGE ACCESS ACT

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ALICE RIVLIN: Good morning. I am Alice Rivlin. I'm the director of the Greater Washington Research Program at the Brookings Institution and I'm just delighted to welcome you this morning to this forum, a Mayor's Forum on the DC Language Access Act. And I'm particularly glad to welcome my good friend, the Mayor of the District of Columbia, Tony Williams, who I will introduce in a few minutes.

As the name of the act suggests, this event is to highlight the importance of the Language Access Act. You'll hear more details about it in a minute, if you are unfamiliar with it. But the point is to make the District government more accessible to residents with limited English knowledge. And that's a lot of people now, and it's a complicated assignment. It just doesn't mean adding a bit of Spanish to what the District government does, although that's very important. We have multiple languages.

We planned this event in conjunction with the District government, and I think we've pulled together a terrific group of people to talk about the issue. We worked with the Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs and the Mayor's Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs, and I think this forum is a great example of what can happen when the research and policy worlds join together to examine policy issues and best practices and what you really need to do to implement a law.

Our first speaker will be Audrey Singer. Audrey's one of my favorite people. She's a very able demographer and she's a very enthusiastic and wonderful colleague, so I am delighted to introduce Audrey. Following Audrey we will hear from Councilmember Jim Graham, who sponsored the Language Access Act. And then as our keynote speaker we will have Mayor Williams, who signed the legislation into law in April. And after Mayor Williams we will have a panel discussion on implementing the law, chaired by Skip McKoy.

So it's my pleasure to introduce Audrey. (Applause.)

AUDREY SINGER: Thank you very much, Alice. I'm very happy to be here today, to be part of today's discussion. It's been a pleasure working with the Office on Latino Affairs and the Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs in the District.

My job here today is to provide an overview of immigration and language use in the region to give us a context for today's discussion on the DC Language Access Act. I'm going to – I wrote the paper with Jill Wilson, who's in the back, if you could raise your hand. That's Jill, we collaborated on this work. It builds on some work that I've done already on immigration to the region and some of this may be a little bit familiar but I just want to provide a little bit of context.

Washington now ranks seventh as the metropolitan area with the largest immigrant population in the nation in terms of the number of immigrants. There were more than 800,000 counted in the 2000 Census, and as you can see, Los Angeles and New York, the big gateways, have more than 3 million, Chicago and Miami more than a million, but Houston, Orange County, California, and Washington, D.C. are all in the same ballpark range. And that number, of course, since 2004 has increased. We don't know by how much. But overall you can see that in 1980 there were slightly more than a quarter of a million foreign-born residents – that's immigrants and refugees of various statuses – living in the region. They were a modest, spatially concentrated quarter of a million, and it's grown to a more geographically dispersed population of over 830,000 in the entire Washington metropolitan region in 2000. This represents a tripling in size, or an increase of more than half a million immigrant residents between 1980 and 2000.

This is just a quick map to show you in 1990 where immigrants were residing in the Washington metropolitan region, which is rather large. As you can see there's 25 jurisdictions, anchored by the District of Columbia in the middle. Immigrants in 1990 resided close to the core of the region. You can see immigrant settlement radiates out along transportation lines in the suburbs, both inside and outside the beltway. By 2000 those areas became more densely populated with the foreign born, and also the foreign born became more dispersed across the region. So there is more dense settlement in the core and in the close-in suburban areas, as well as more immigrants moving outward in the region altogether.

The Washington metropolitan region is now 17 percent foreign born. It varies across jurisdictions, so that top orange bar shows the 17 percent, but you can see that Arlington, Alexandria, Montgomery and Fairfax are all about one-quarter foreign born, while the District and Prince George's County are at about 13 percent for the District and 14 percent for Prince George's County.

As many of us already know, the Washington region is a very unique mix of immigrant groups. One of the most important aspects, and this is compared to other metropolitan areas across the country, is that not a single group dominates the immigrant source countries in the region. El Salvador is the largest and in 2000 13 percent of the foreign born were from El Salvador, but you can see the next three countries – Korea, India, Vietnam – are between 4 and 6 percent, from various parts of Asia, followed by Mexico, 4 percent, China 3 percent, and so on. So the lack of a single group that dominates, and the fact that immigrants are literally from all over the map characterize Washington's immigrants.

Now I'm going to talk a little bit about how language data were collected by Census 2000. This is a reproduction of the language question– this is the formal questionnaire. Please note that it includes only people over the age of 5. First people were asked, "does this person speak a language other than English at home." If the answer was yes, they went on to the next question. If it was no, they skip the next two questions. Respondents wrote in the language that they spoke at home, and then reported

how well they or the person that they were filling the form out spoke English – well, very well, well, not well, or not at all.

So please note that it refers to people's English-speaking ability, not necessarily their reading and writing, and it's self-reported. All persons that indicated they spoke a language other than English at home as their primary language are included in what we are going to see in terms of languages other than English spoken at home. More than 2,000 languages were written in for Census 2000. Census tabulates the data into about 380 languages and language groups which we have access to some of the time, but mostly we're working from a shorter list of 39 language groups and individual languages, and as you'll see, sometimes there are just four broad categories.

We're particularly interested today in the limited English proficient population, and this is defined as anyone who answered they spoke English well, not very well, or not at all. So you can see its the last three responses to this question of how well the person speaks English. And this is in line with the definition used by the D.C. Language Access Act.

Now more than – well, nearly 1 million speakers of languages other than English at home are residing in the region as of 2000, that's 21 percent of the greater Washington region who speak a language other than English at home. It's smaller for the District, about 17 percent, or one in six. But you can see here that in the region about 43 percent are Spanish speakers, and then there are about 50,000 speakers of Chinese, African languages and French at home. A grouping there. There's another grouping after Korean, Vietnamese and Arabic, Tagalog and Persian speakers who are about 28,000 in the region.

In the District if we move in a little bit closer you can see that there are about half, a little bit more than half, or 55 percent of all the speakers of a language other than English at home speak Spanish. After that, 10 percent are French speakers, one-third are the aggregated African languages, and after that is Chinese.

Let me just say a little bit about the languages themselves. Spanish speakers come from a number of countries, mostly in the Western hemisphere: Latin America and the Caribbean, but also from Spain. The African languages that are grouped here are dominated by two languages in particular – Amharic speakers, predominantly from Ethiopia, and speakers of the languages of Nigeria, and they're grouped, you'll see later on, as Kru, Ibo and Yoruba. French speakers in the region and particularly in the District are largely from francophone Africa, but they're also from France, and more broadly in the region, Haiti and Canada.

We looked at the change between 1990 and 2000 to see how the limited English proficient, or the LEP population grew, and you can see here, this slide shows you in 1990 how many LEP speakers there were in each of these jurisdictions in 1990 and 2000, what percentage they comprised of the total population of residents in those places, and how much they changed or grew in the 1990's. So overall you can see on the bottom line

an 80 percent increase in this population occurred, from about 230,000 limited English proficient speakers in 1990 to over 400,000 in 2000. If we look at the District, that movement was from about 30,000 to 38,000, representing a change in the total limited English proficient population of 5 to 7 percent. More broadly, region-wide it was from about 6 to 9 percent.

But you can see in places like Arlington and Alexandria and Montgomery County the limited English proficient population in 2000 is in the double digits, and the growth rates there are a little bit higher than in the District, more closely resembling the region as a whole.

This is a map of the limited English proficient population. What we did was we took those residents who are limited English proficient and mapped them by census tract, so it's not surprising that we see that this population closely tracks the immigrant population. You can see the greenish areas are the highest concentration of the LEP population, and there are several of those concentrations along the Prince George's-Montgomery County border, Silver Spring, Wheaton, Takoma Park, Langley Park area. There's a high proportion there going out in Montgomery County along Route 270. In the central corridor in the District, there are brighter spots near Chinatown and also in Columbia Heights and Adams Morgan. And out in Virginia, southern Arlington, and Fairfax County, there are high concentrations of the limited English proficient population.

This is a graph that shows us the LEP population for the entire Washington metropolitan area, so you can see that half of them, fully half of them, 52 percent, are Spanish speakers at home. About 17 percent are what are being grouped together as Indo-European languages. This is a mixture of Indic languages like Hindu and Urdu and the languages of Iran, but also almost all of the European languages together. This is how we get the data from the Census. And 25 percent of all LEP residents in the region speak Asian and Pacific Island languages, with very far-ranging source countries like China, and languages like Chinese, Korean, Tagalog, Vietnamese. Six percent speak other languages, and this is where all the African languages are, as well as Arabic and Hebrew.

Now let's take a look at what it looks like in the District. A higher proportion of Spanish speakers. Remember, it was 52 percent in the greater Washington region versus 66, or two-thirds of the non-English speaking population, at-home speakers speak Spanish. And there's more of a comparable population of other Indo-European languages at 15 percent, and Asian and Pacific Island languages at 12 percent, and other languages are about the same in the District as they were in the region, at 7 percent.

This is the graph that I think is one of the most important ones. This shows individual languages within the District, and let me just make a few points first before talking about what's in the graph. The bars are actually representative of the absolute size of these language populations. So Spanish is the largest, you can see it's got the largest bars, and that's why the other ones are so small. They're dwarfed by the number

of Spanish LEP residents in the District. The orange bars show what proportion of those – the speakers of that language are limited English proficient, and the yellow are the non-limited English proficient population.

So starting with the Spanish speakers, again, we've got over 40,000 in the District. About half of them are limited English proficient and about half are not. If you look to the next couple of groups, among French speakers only about 27 percent are limited English proficient, and the largest group with limited English proficient language populations are Chinese and the Vietnamese populations. Among Chinese speakers, about 68 percent are limited in their English skills. Vietnamese, fully three-quarters of them are limited in their English skills.

And the other groups that follow, you can look at this also in the paper and I hope everybody had a chance to pick up the white paper that's in the back on the table. Amharic, Tagalog, Italian, Arabic, Kru/Ibo/ Yoruba, and French Creole who are speakers from Haiti largely.

I have one more slide to show you, and this is a breakdown of the nativity or the birthplace of language speakers in the District and in other jurisdictions in the region. So here we have bars that are split into native-born or US-born populations in yellow, and the foreign born or immigrant population in orange. And some of the surprises here have to do with the high share of native born District residents and several other jurisdictions who are limited English proficient. So the District of Columbia at 21 percent, or one in five of the limited English proficient population are US-born. And that's followed by Prince George's County, where 20 percent, and Prince William County, where 20 percent are in the same situation.

And we can't go too deeply into this data with the data that we have at hand, but what these – who these US-born people are are largely the children of immigrants, they're children who are born in the US, who are basically living in immigrant households and therefore they are sort of subject to the same conditions in immigrant families that are – that make it difficult to learn English, especially inside the home, where the mother tongue is largely spoken.

There is also the possibility that some of these people are children who are born in the US who spend a lot of time in their home country, or spent a lot of time going back and forth. So this is something we need to know more about because it seems that they share a lot of characteristics with of course immigrant children, or children born outside the US.

I want to end here so we can begin our discussion of the Language Access Act, and I'm looking forward to hearing from everybody, especially our panel discussion. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MS. RIVLIN: Thank you very much, Audrey. Before I introduce the Mayor, I want to say one word as an economist. When you listen to Audrey and listen to all of these languages, it sounds as though this is a daunting problem for our public services, and in many ways it is. But remember, this is a measure of success. If we were not such a community with opportunity which was perceived as a good place to live, we would not be attracting this many people from all around the world. So we should think of this as something that goes with success, with economic development, and with making the District of Columbia as well as the surrounding region a place that people want to come and live and be.

Now let me introduce a man who has had a lot to do with our being a very attractive place to be, the Mayor of the District of Columbia. Tony's been mayor now for, it seems like a long time but it's only been about five years. And he has made enormous changes in the District of Columbia, bringing us from a government which was barely functioning to one which is running services in a much more modern way and meeting the challenges like this one. So it gives me great pleasure to introduce our Mayor, and my good friend, Tony Williams.

(Applause.)

MAYOR ANTHONY WILLIAMS: How's everyone? Very good. It's a pleasure to be out here at Brookings. And first of all, under Alice's – Alice has been involved in Brookings on and off for a long time, but under her most recent leadership certainly and under the leadership of Strobe Talbott, I want to commend the Brookings Institution for really stepping up and redoubling its effort to get itself involved in local communities across the country, and particularly in our own city of Washington, D.C., so I want you all to give Alice a big hand for that – (applause) – and many other things she's involved in doing.

Councilman Graham is not yet here but I want to acknowledge his real advocacy when it comes to issues of language access and diversity in our city. He's not just looking for the weathervane. He's really out there pushing the envelope, so I want to acknowledge him. He's been very, very steadfast, so when he gets here, please acknowledge him heartily.

Jay Haddock is here, and Jay, thank you for serving as the chair of a lot of different things and involved in many different things, but in this incarnation you're chair of the Mayor's Latino Commission, so I want everybody to give Jay Haddock a big hand, acknowledge him.

(Applause.)

John Tinpe is chair of the Mayor's API – Asian-Pacific Islanders Commission – and he's done a great job on that, so acknowledge him. John Tinpe.

(Applause.)

And Greg Chen of the office of Asian-Pacific Islanders working is with him. Julie Koo in the Office of Asian-Pacific Islanders as well, and Julie's here, so acknowledge her.

(Applause.)

The same kind of counterpart, point-counterpoint relationship with Jay exists with our director of OLA, and he comes with a very impressive background in the policy area and the nonprofit area, a really impressive background in engagement, involvement in all these issues that we're talking about, that's Gustavo Velasquez. Let's acknowledge him, director of OLA.

(Applause.)

I've got a number of my cabinet here and I want to recognize them for being here because customer service is such a big, big part of this. Dave Clark, retired from American Bandstand, he's now running – no, I'm just kidding – (laughter) – but Dave Clark, DCRA, Consumer Regulatory Affairs. (Applause.) Thank you, Dave, for what you're doing in Consumer Regulatory Affairs because that's a big, big interface with our communities, not only in customer service, but as we all know, in terms of nuisance abatement and quality housing, habitable housing.

Jane Park is director of Asian-Pacific Americans Legal Resources Center. Where is Jane? Let's acknowledge here. (Applause.) Thank you, Jane, for being here.

Okay, Jim's here now. Everybody, give him a big hand.

(Applause.)

You know, there are two different ways of really, I guess, integrating folks into a community. One is the old fashioned way. It doesn't work very well. You still hear jingoists and other folks much too ethnocentric and kind of with their head in the sand saying, well, you know, English is our language, learn it. And if you can't, too bad.

I made good friends with the mayor of Paris, and he's a wonderful guy. As a matter of fact he – in France the mayor of Paris is a big deal because their cities are so much more important in their country. So he came over here to speak to our National League of Cities, and he was warmly greeted. So I reciprocated and I went over there to speak to this Union of World Officials, and I found myself there, and being in France the mayor insisted that everybody there at this Union of World Officials had to speak French. So I was already at a loss because I don't speak French, right? So then to make matters worse I found myself in this reception, and then he had all the francophone countries there. And in the middle of this reception, here I am standing looking stupid, the president of Senegal comes, and then the mayor of Dakar, who's a sister city of Washington, D.C. comes, and they all start talking. And then they all look at – it's

almost like one of these comedy shows – and they all look at me and they all speak – not only are they all speaking French but they're all asking me different questions simultaneously. So I just stood there nodding. I didn't know whether they were calling me an idiot. I'm just nodding like this.

And all of a sudden the mayor, God bless his heart, he starts yelling at me in English, speak – and with gusto and real emotion – he started yelling, "Speak French!" And like I felt like my dad was saying, learn how to walk, or something. I'm looking at him like – speak French! Well, that's one way of doing it, right? Another way of doing it is to recognize that we're a diverse world, we're a diverse society, and people may not have language proficiency in your country, right. That's what we're talking about here.

Now a big, big person who's pushing that is this mayor. Jim Graham is pushing it. Ken Saunders, who is our Office of Human Rights, is pushing it. Let's acknowledge him. (Applause.) A lot of different people are pushing it. Why are we pushing it? You know, Cesar Chavez said it best. He said, we cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community. Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes. And then, very importantly, he says, for our own. That's really what we're here for this morning, and that's what our panel is really going to be focusing on. I want to thank all of you for joining all of us this morning.

As some of you may know, the District of Columbia metro area, as we've just seen from the statistics, is now the seventh largest immigrant portal or gateway in the United States. Our city has become, as you've seen from the slides, a new mecca – there's no other way of putting it – for immigrants into the United States in the last few decades, with a five-fold increase in 30 years.

Now historically new immigrants to our country have settled first in our classic big port cities. We think of New York, we think of Los Angeles, we think of Chicago. But in the last 20 years our city has become a major destination for immigrants. We've added nearly 600,000 residents born outside the United States, according to the report we've just witnessed. My personal evidence of this, of the diverse population we have in our area, and that it's not only in our city but around the region, is every year I go to Tom Davis' Christmas party, and when you go to Tom Davis' Christmas party there is a microcosm, right out there in Fairfax County, Arlington, all of that, of how diverse our population is. It's really like going to a world's fair. That's how diverse the population is in this region.

Now the demographic data that we've seen presented is in fact solid evidence and testimony of the rapid growth of immigrants and non-English speakers in our city and region. And as I've said earlier, I applaud Brookings for its efforts, and I encourage them to continue working with us to make better decisions. We know a large majority of DC immigrants speak English well. Unfortunately residents, particularly in our city, who are in poverty are the ones most affected by language barriers. As we know, language barriers can severely impact the well-being of a population that has decided to come to

our city, as Alice was saying, because there is a hope of opportunity. There's ambition for the family. They come to our city. Language can present almost a brick wall in terms of blocking that access and that opportunity. So we have to do a better job in all these different areas, and we have to do a better job funding English as second language programs.

Although learning English for adult and youth immigrants is ultimately the goal, we also have to be responsive to the great need that has resulted from language barriers. So what are we doing about it? And this is just talking about English as a second language for people and descendants who are coming to this country. That's not even touching on the whole language access issues that we as Americans face in dealing with a global economy. You could have a whole conference on that. I mean, here we are in the middle of the Near East and embroiled in all this mess, and probably about 15 people speak Arabic in the United States. But anyway, that's another issue.

More than four years ago I launched the Mayor's LEP Initiative. Now what is that about? Well, our Office of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs, and our Office of Latino Affairs are ensuring the success of this initiative. Simply put, we're making progress on many fronts. We've seen massive changes in the translation of documents, Internet content in other languages, and a host of other efforts to eliminate language barriers. And I supported – and again, I applaud all the advocates. Jim, thank you. I supported and signed our new Language Access Act, and I'm proud that we have that in place. Why? Because this bold and innovative new act builds upon the LEP initiative. And as it does that it also makes it stronger from a compliance and enforcement perspective.

You know, encouragement is good and motivation is good, but often in these areas of opportunity and access a little compliance and enforcement – right, Ken? – is also important. Kind of makes people negotiate with a little more good faith, right?

And I also want to applaud the intense advocacy and hard work of all of you who've pushed to make this act a reality in our city. I've mentioned a couple of names, but all of you have also played a role in this, and I'm thrilled to see that members of my administration are a part of this, are taking partnership in this, and are not just begrudging kind of like, you know, supplicants to this. They really are a part of this and really believe in it.

So we believe in this law, we're going to make this law work by not – I guess essentially not making it, not looking at it as simply a law, but really looking at it as – what's the best way of putting it – a change of culture, a change of doing business, a new way of thinking.

I'm also very, very proud that our city is moving in the direction of – I wouldn't say that we're there yet, being a national leader, but I would say that we're moving in the direction of working hard to provide fair and equitable opportunities to our immigrant communities. It includes safe and habitable housing. It includes quality education. It

includes living in a safe neighborhood. It includes access to jobs, which incidentally is provided by a strong economy. It includes living in a community that recognizes its diversity and recognizes the wealth of different backgrounds and origins of all its people in language access. All of those are aspects of a quality community, and all of those are our goal.

But it also recognizes, particularly in our city, where we're fighting for full democracy, it recognizes that in Washington, D.C., where you're looking at Washington, D.C., many of the people with language issues in our city were not born in our city and yet are solid citizens of our city, it recognizes that we have to continue to push to broaden the franchise in our city as we look to broaden the franchise – this is my own opinion, as we look to broaden the franchise in our country. I believe that this is very, very important.

In the next 20 or 30 years, the statistics you're seeing here – I'd like to be around, I hope I'll be around 20 or 30 years from now. When you look at the statistics in our region and you look at the statistics in our country, we're really looking at just the head of the wave. The basic demographics and the composition of our country is changing in a very powerful way, and I think we ought to embrace it. I think we ought to endorse it, and I think we ought to really look at it as a sign of our strength. Our nation, as we've always said, unless you were here Native American, our nation is a nation of immigrants. You either came here in steerage – I guess a couple of people came on the Mayflower, and everybody else came either in steerage or you came in bondage. So we're all immigrants from somewhere else. We've got to always remember that as we listen to the panel today and as a way of thinking and doing and being we embrace all the principles we share. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

MS. RIVLIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor. The mayor's anecdote about Paris– I can imagine his discomfort– but it reminded me once I was in Beijing some years ago. I went out to get some exercise and I wandered away from the hotel and I wasn't paying enough attention and suddenly I realized I'm lost, and I can't tell anybody anything. I can't tell them who I am or where I want to go. I did find my way back, but it was a moment of panic, which made me realize what it's really like to be in a place where you can't communicate well, or in my case at all.

It's now my pleasure to introduce one of my favorite members of the council, the hard-working, always enthusiastic Jim Graham, who represents Ward 1 in a wonderful way, and it's a very polyglot place in every dimension. Jim, perhaps not surprisingly, introduced the act which is the subject of our discussion today. Jim, would you come say a few words?

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN JIM GRAHAM: Thank you very much. Good morning, everybody. I want to say first off how much – he's gone, but I think we need to recognize the mayor because he was there on this issue relatively early on, with his staff, with his administrative initiative, which involved Calvin Robinson and people who work with Calvin Robinson. So could we have another round of applause for the Mayor and his efforts. (Applause.)

With that said – I mean, this is really a victory for the community of interests that formed the Language Access Coalition. If you were involved in the Language Access Coalition, could you please stand so that we can acknowledge you for your hard work on this important initiative? Thank you.

(Applause.)

And you can see, and there are many here – there are many who are not here because it was a huge coalition, bridging all manner of cultural, language, ethnic backgrounds, who came together, found common purpose, and worked very, very hard. If you think this was easy, please think again.

I do want to also acknowledge Natwar Gandhi, who is not here, who is our chief financial officer because he really put his shoulder to the wheel in terms of figuring out how we could afford to do this in a very, very tight budget situation.

And let me also say how much the Brookings Institution means to us in terms of this endeavor. Dr. Rivlin, thank you very much for hosting this today. I want to especially acknowledge Dr. Singer. Doctor, I wish we had all these statistics when we were considering the act. It would have made it a lot easier, but we thank you very much for your hard work in this area as well.

This was a two-year effort. It was – it took a great deal of energy and commitment from a broad range of people, as I have mentioned. I'm very proud of the fact, though, that we now have the third – and I think we have the best language access law in the United States of America. We have in place a statute upon which those – Gustavo Velasquez, Kenneth Saunders of the Office of Human Rights, who will be responsible for the actual implementation along with Senor Velasquez – will bring about, and they've already been to Oakland. You're going to hear all about that and it's very exciting.

I come to this issue as an immigrant. I came to this country when I was eight years old. My parents brought me, mostly kicking and screaming, to a place called Hyattsville. Some of you may have heard of Hyattsville. And even though I could speak the language, because I was born in Scotland we could speak the language, I was most definitely an immigrant. I was somebody who had arrived. This was my adopted country. I was not a citizen of the United States. I well remember when I was a member of the ROTC when I was not permitted to wear a uniform and I had to go through all the drills and all the maneuvers of the ROTC in my civilian clothing, and perhaps that and – I

know other experiences prompted me to become the first naturalized citizen in my family. So I find it very fitting that as an immigrant and as a naturalized citizen I represent the most diverse and certainly immigrant-populated ward in the District of Columbia.

My recent efforts, which are sometimes very good and sometimes not so good, to learn Spanish have taught me the additional dimension of this, which is how difficult it is to communicate, and it has given me an appreciation, particularly in emergency situations. And I appreciate the Mayor's anecdote about being called upon to speak French – that's the language I studied in college. I don't know why, in retrospect, but I did. You know what I'm talking about? But anyway, it's one thing to be called upon to speak a foreign language in that situation. It's quite another in an emergency situation, when the ambulance driver is there, or it's 911, or you're seeking an important entitlement.

Our hearings that we held at the council brought home the issue of young children nine years old, being called upon to be interpreters in complex medical matters for their parents. It also brought home for us our public school system's use of janitors as translators. Things that are unacceptable to us. Every work has nobility and I care about everything that everybody does to make this a better society for us, but the fact of the matter is that the Language Access Act says we can, we must do more in terms of these issues.

I do believe that it's important to people to learn English, just like it's important for me to continue to try to learn Spanish. And I'm very proud of the Carlos Rosario International Adult Charter School, which is about open at 11th and Harvard, with its huge programs relating to English as a second language and other efforts. But the fact of the matter is that we have to deal with people where they are. We cannot deal with them as a wish list of where we want them to be.

I know in Ward 1 and all the statistics that we now have about the District of Columbia, there are a number of people who do not speak English and do not speak English well. Forty percent of the school children, the public school children in Ward 1 go home every night and do not speak English at home. And they don't speak English for a reason, and that is the fact that their parents, their grandparents, their other relations simply don't understand the language.

Finally, I just want to conclude by saying this was all brought home to me in very, very dramatic terms just a few days ago on Park Road, when there was a fight that led to a stabbing between Vietnamese. I arrived on the scene about an hour after it happened. One or two people spoke English. Most of the people who were gathered on that block of Park Road spoke only Vietnamese. And you know what made the difference? What made the difference that day was a Vietnamese member of the police department, who was there, who could communicate readily with the people involved. It was obviously a matter of great passion and excitement and tragedy, and we had on the beat a police officer who was Vietnamese and spoke Vietnamese, and it made all the difference. This

is the type of thing we need to do more of. This is the type of thing that we need to be committed to. I thank you all for being here. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. RIVLIN: Thank you very much. And now it is my pleasure to introduce Skip McKoy, who will introduce the panel. Skip, where are you?

And Skip is another wonderful person that we are lucky to have in Washington, who for some years ran the late lamented DC Agenda, which made enormous contributions to the city of Washington, and it's my pleasure to introduce Skip, who will introduce the panel.

(Applause.)

SKIP McKOY: Could I just ask the panel to come up. Can everybody hear me?

First I'd like to thank Alice and Brookings and Audrey Singer. This is terrific – it's a terrific event, it's a terrific opportunity, and I'm just delighted to have a chance to be part of it this morning. I also thank the Mayor and Councilmember Graham.

I had a story, before Alice told her story of being in Beijing. I had a similar occurrence in Guan-jo (ph) in southern China. But what I'm reminded of this morning is the fact that my father was an English teacher, so he would be glad that I think I'm finally proficient in English. (Laughter)

This morning we're really extremely lucky to have people who've been involved with LEP and LAP across the country, so I think you're going to have a rich set of presentations and an opportunity for lots of questions and answers. You'll find in your packet the bios of everybody, so I'm not going to read those. And what I'd like to do, I'm just going to introduce them in the order in which we'd like them to speak. Now each panelist is going to have roughly five minutes to talk about their program, the key features of the program, the various populations and languages that they're dealing with and, if they have an opportunity in their initial presentation, the sorts of challenges that they think, particularly if they're from out of town, as three of them are, from the District, the sort of challenges that we here in the District can anticipate facing as we get going.

Then after we have the presentations from the panel, I'll open up to questions and answers. If you have a question – have we passed out the cards? There are cards, and Martha Ross there in the back in the pink blouse has 3x5 cards. Please write them down. Now if you want them read, try and write them legibly. Otherwise, that's okay. We'll collect the cards and we'll use that as a means of beginning to engage in questions and answers.

So this is the order we'd like to have our five-minute presentations. First will be Ken Saunders, who's director of D.C. Office of Human Rights. Then Tedla Giorgis,

who's program manager in the Cultural Competence Program at the D.C. Mental Health. Ellen Fatah, who is deputy director, Office of Early Childhood Education, but who also may refer to some of her experiences at the Department of Health. Then Deborah Liu, director of Equal Access from the city of Oakland. That's California. Shu-Ping Chan, who's in the Office of the County Executive in Montgomery County, and finally, Angie Carrera, who's Language Access Coordinator for Fairfax County. So hold your questions until they've made their presentations and then we'll get into it.

Ken?

KENNETH SAUNDERS: Good morning, everybody. I'm going to be very brief in my comments. They shouldn't take five minutes. Basically what I'm going to do is give you a brief overview of where we came from, where we are, and some of the key provisions of the Language Access Act and where we are today.

In early 2000, the District government Office of Personnel conducted a language survey to evaluate the accessibility of government programs to limited or no English speaking populations in the District of Columbia. The results came back less than desirable. As a result, the District government developed a language access initiative to improve access to its LEP and NEP population in five core areas: translations, diversity in the workforce, cultural sensitivity training, partnerships with CBO's for grant funding, and community outreach. By late 2000, 31 government agencies became part of this initiative.

Now the Language Access Act of 2004 was signed by the Mayor on April 21st, 2004, to provide greater access and participation in public services programs and activities for residents and visitors to the District of Columbia with limited or no English proficiency. This act has made it mandatory for all covered entities within the District government to comply with its provisions by October 1, 2006. Now, what is a covered entity? That means any District government agency, department, or program that furnishes information or renders services, programs or activities directly to the public.

Now some of the provisions of the act. Agencies, departments and programs must assess the need for and offer oral language services. In addition, agencies, departments and programs must provide written translations of vital documents. What do we mean by vital documents? Applications, notices, complaint forms, legal contracts, and outreach materials to any non-English language spoken by a limited or no English proficient population that constitutes 3 percent, or 500 individuals, whichever is less.

Of the populations served and encountered, or likely to be served or encountered, agencies, departments and programs must track, assess and make efforts to fill personal contact positions with individuals who speak one or more of the languages covered in the Language Access Act. The government for the District of Columbia Office of Personnel has and will continue to support all agencies in this effort. Agencies, departments and programs must implement a language access plan and designate a language access coordinator.

Now what have we done up to this point? Well, we've seen the act pass. We traveled out to Oakland, California to observe some of the best practices, and at this time I would like to thank not just Deborah Liu, who's here today, but the city of Oakland and the city of San Francisco for taking out time. We spent probably an entire day at the city of Oakland, and I can say, and I think I've talked to Gustavo and Greg Chen about it, it probably took about six months off of the lead time of what we were trying to do. When we went out there, we weren't totally in a fog but it was pretty scary. After meeting with the individuals from the city of Oakland, I think we met that night and we said, boy, you know, we can do this.

Now, the Office of Human Rights. That's where the language access director will be housed. In conjunction with the Office of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs and the Office of Latino Affairs, the language access director will coordinate and supervise District government programs, departments and services in complying with the provisions of this act.

Now what have we done? Well, we took what we learned in Oakland and what we are doing is we are incorporating what we are already doing. So we're not going to stop anything that we're doing. The Mayor's initiative with the Office of Latino Affairs and the Office of Asian-Pacific Island Affairs, all agencies will continue to do that work. And we will fold that into a much broader plan, and these plans will be reported out on a quarterly basis and not just on a yearly basis. That's a conclusion we came to a couple of months ago.

Now the phased implementation. A cluster of agencies, departments and services are mandated to be in compliance with the act each fiscal year. The first agencies, and we're talking about October 1st of this year, are the Department of Health, Department of Human Services, Department of Employment Services, NPD, DC public schools, the Office of Planning, Fire and Emergency Medical Services, and the Office of Human Rights.

I truly believe that the Language Access Act of 2004 is a clear demonstration of the successful efforts of the Mayor's administration, District Council, and the LEP population working together to formulate and implement an innovative and ground-breaking plan. This plan outlined for you today will ensure that all District of Columbia residents, including those who are of limited English proficiency, shall be able to access the services and programs that are available to them. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. McKOY: Tedla?

TEDLA GIORGIS: My name is Tedla Giorgis and I'm with the Department of Mental Health, and I'm going to talk a little bit about the Department of Mental Health's effort to make its services accessible and acceptable to the limited English language

proficient populations. So I'm going to be a little bit more specific in regards to mental health.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General's report published in 2001, the United States mental health systems are not well prepared to meet the needs of racial and ethnic minority groups, who remain ill-served or under-served. This is especially of great concern in such cities like Washington, D.C.

[END SIDE 1 OF TAPE 1.]

-- to such groups. And according to the U.S. Census Bureau, these groups, as Dr. Singer indicated, are going to grow significantly in the coming years to come.

Therefore, in order to address the issue of accessing our services to the limited English proficiency, we went beyond the issue of language. We got involved in developing a culture of competence action plan for the department. Therefore, in order to address the issue of mental health care disparity, the District of Columbia's Department of Mental Health Establishment Amendment Act of 2001 included cultural competence as an important ingredient to make the delivery of its services relevant and acceptable to the diverse population the department serves.

The act itself defined cultural competence as, quote, "the ability of a provider" – in other words, whether it's a psychologist or a psychiatrist or the mental health counselor – "to deliver mental health services and mental health support in a manner that effectively responds to the languages, values and practices present in the various cultures of the provider's consumers of mental health services," unquote. Now as part of its new direction, when the new mental health system started to operate under Ms. Martha Knisley, who's the new department head, the department took steps to ensure that activities and services are characterized by cultural competence.

Remember, we're not talking about cultural sensitivity here. We're talking about cultural competence. One example I give in terms of the difference between cultural sensitivity versus cultural competence is, if you're supposed to go and get, say, operated for some medical issues, would you rather be operated by a culturally sensitive surgeon, or a culturally competent surgeon? And I'm sure there is no dispute in terms of what would be your preference. So think of, when I'm talking about cultural competence, I'm talking about skills that are involved in making sure service deliveries are up to par with what's expected with the clinical standards. Therefore, in order to ensure that its activities and services are characterized by cultural competence, which undoubtedly has been an important requisite for success as a service delivery agency and government entity in a city that's racially, culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse.

Subsequently the director of the department, Ms. Martha Knisley, appointed a 25-member cultural competency advisory committee to guide, make recommendations and develop an action plan on this new initiative. Various representatives of the community were invited to serve on the committee, including consumers, family members, providers of mental health services, and community leaders from local organizations.

Right from the outset we knew that the involvement of community gatekeepers and stakeholders is an important ingredient to make this initiative work. And I'll say the same thing for our Language Access Act. There is a great deal of importance to make sure community gatekeepers welcome community-based organizations' involvement to ensure quality of translating materials, and the accessibility of these translated materials into the communities is a very essential feature.

The cultural competence action plan that we developed at Department of Mental Health revolved around seven domains of cultural competence, so it's not only language we're talking about. We're talking about values and attributes of our staff, communication styles, community-consumer participation, physical environment, policies and procedures, and population-based clinical practice and training and professional development.

For example, in terms of our staffing, every individual, every staff member is required to take eight hours of cultural competency training on an annual basis, and we follow that. That's to make sure it's just not only the language but also the clinical practice that's being delivered is up to par with standards. And one example of a training that we provide to our psychiatrists or physicians is what we call ethno-psycho-pharmacology, which covers the administration and management of psychotropic medications of the different racial and ethnic minority groups.

The reason that such training is being provided is because many studies have clearly demonstrated that different racial and ethnic minority groups respond differently to medication when administered with the same dose, both in regards to therapeutic effect as well as side effects. We know from experience that a number of African-Americans actually, including Asian and Pacific Islanders, drop from treatment because they cannot tolerate side effects. So different dose affects the side effects and the therapeutic efficacy of how that medication being administered. In fact, there is a good expression. It's called different dose for different folks. (Laughter) So it's not only the language that we have to look at. We have to also look at what's appropriate and important to clinical practice.

I know my time is up and if there are any questions, we'll deal with it in the question/answer period. Thank you.

(Applause.)

ELLEN FATAH: Good morning, everyone.

MR. McKOY: Good morning.

MS. FATAH: Before I start, I would like to talk about the mission of the Office of Early Childhood Development. It's childcare, but it's tied in nicely with the family, as well as economic development in the city. The mission of the Office of Early Childhood Development is to ensure that the government and private sectors are aware of and responsive to the child development and early care education needs of the community in the District. This is done on behalf of our children and families, and in partnership with the public and private organizations that are concerned with the future of children in the District of Columbia.

Some of our goals are to assist parents in selecting child care, in paying for child care to eligible children, and also to improve the overall quality of early care and education in the District. We also manage scholarship programs for national accreditation for centers and homes, and a scholarship program for workers seeking professional early childhood development credentials.

What have we done for people who have limited English proficiency in our community? We have done a lot. We have bilingual friendly employees to provide service directly to the people who seek our service. We have translated material into different languages. We have established partnerships with community-based organizations, or CBO, serving English learners, and we have also begun help build capacity for the LEP community.

First I will talk about our bilingual workforce and how we provided oral interpretation to our customers in our partnership and capacity building efforts in the LEP community. Then I will speak about our plan to improve the quality of translated material for the LEP customer. Our workforce, about 38 percent of our 71 staff speak five other languages – Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, French and German. Almost 23 percent of the employees are fluent in Spanish. At least one staff person in each division speaks, reads and writes Spanish. We also encourage employees who are not native Spanish speakers to take Spanish classes at the Center for Workforce Development. We continue to recruit bilingual personnel to fill vacant positions. Additionally, we have three staff who are proficient in sign language.

Oral interpretation for customers. Sixteen of our bilingual Spanish speaking employees, including eight supervisors, work directly with customers. This demonstrates how important customer service is to us. These employees are receptionists, social service representatives, early intervention specialists, training coordinators, and customer service representatives. They communicate directly with Spanish speaking customers who seek OECD services. Occasionally they act as interpreters for other government agencies or medical institutions where OECD customers seek service. We use language line service to assist customers who speak other languages.

Ninety percent of our employees have received training in Title 6 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and use the language line service to assist customers who speak other

languages. We have posted signs on the availability of free interpreter service for LEP customers in all reception areas and in the waiting rooms. As I mentioned earlier, we have three employees who are proficient in sign language to assist hearing and speech impaired customers. In major OECD sponsored events we provide upon request qualified interpreters for simultaneous interpretation in Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Amharic, and sign language as well.

The District of Columbia ranked number one in the percentage of licensed child care home providers and number two in the percentage of licensed child care centers receiving national accreditation. Our success built on continuous partnerships with other government agencies and private organizations, as well as community and faith-based organizations. In the last few years we have been using the same concept to build partnerships with the LEP community. We went to CBO's to help LEP community build capacity in the early care and education fields. Marriage (ph) Center provides outreach services that specifically target organizations that serve English learners and provide them with technical assistance to help them become licensed childcare providers.

Cavalry bilingual multicultural centers provide child development associate CDA training to English learners who are interested in entering in the early care and education fields. Cavalry provides monolingual and bilingual CDA classes in Spanish and use interpreters with training when training Vietnamese, Chinese and Amharic speakers. So far over 100 English learners native from Latin American countries, China, Vietnam and Ethiopia have completed CDA training.

Many graduates are working in the centers, or have gotten the license to operate a child development home. Addition of this bilingual early care and education professionals help meet the child care needs of many LEP families who otherwise may not feel comfortable to leave the children in an environment that they do not understand. For translation I draw on this experience when I was the API manager in the Department of Health. In the past we relied on translation vendors to give us assurance on the quality of the translated documents, which may not have been translated accurately or appropriate for the target community. This year we have changed how we handle translation.

We have completed our inventory of all the printed materials and forms and prioritized them for translation for FY-04, -05 and -06. We have taken special care in selecting the translation vendors to ensure that they understand our service and our target audience. We have identified peer reviewers to review translated documents for retention of meaning, accuracy, cultural and linguistic appropriateness. The final approved translated documents will be field-tested in the target community to ensure that our target audience easily understands them before these documents are printed and distributed.

I will answer any questions that you have later on.

(Applause.)

DEBORAH LIU: Buenos dias a todos. Chao sun (ph). Good morning. My name is Deborah Liu and I am very honored to be here thanks to the Office of Human Rights to share with you one of the most exciting models that I think we have created for the nation, which is for language access. There are just so many things that I want to share with you that I don't know if I'm going to be able to cover it for five minutes.

I have brought for you copies of particular items that we have been working in the city of Oakland and I just want to share with you a couple of them because I think that these are very important. This is what we call our briefing of what the Equal Access Office is in the city of Oakland, which of course here Kenneth is going to grab a lot of it and just see what works here in D.C.

In Oakland, which we are the first city in the nation to pass an ordinance, we decided that we could not cover 150 different languages and have 150 different documents for everything in each particular document. So what we decided to do was that every time we have 10,000 people, we translate that language, we can convert that language in the office. So currently we cover Spanish and Chinese, and we ensure that the 17 different agencies of the city are in compliance with this ordinance.

I want to go into just talking a little bit about the Cityline system, and I already brought a copy for you, which is outside. This is one of the most innovative multilingual systems in the nation too. It's in five different languages, and this is a system that we have recorded every single city service here is listed, and people can access it in Spanish, Chinese, both Cantonese and Mandarin, Vietnamese, and of course in English. And people don't need to come to the city and stand in line and see what they need to do for a particular service. So everything is outlined in this particular system. This something that you could also look into doing.

So I'm going to just start here and tell you about what our specific recommendations are for all of you. I'm just so proud to see so many representatives from the community-based organizations. I think this is a very great opportunity for you to learn what your city is doing, what different resources they have from us. As Ken was saying, we were just so happy to be able to give them eight hours of our time to share with them everything that they need to know, everything that we have experimented in. We were very happy to have just free access to test every single thing that we were created in, that we just had ideas on.

When I came to the city of Oakland, they gave us the ordinance and we were 20 candidates fighting for the position of director of Equal Access. And ever since I read the ordinance, and coming from a background where my mom is Mexican, my dad is Chinese, I have lived in Mexico, I have lived in the United States, I have lived part of my life in China, I completely understand the difficulties and the challenges of being an interpreter, of being culturally sensitive, of understanding what needs to be done. I kept interpreting for my dad in Chinese and Spanish for my mom, and then in English, and then just mixing it all up. I mean, I eat tortillas and rice for dinner. (Laughter) I breathe it every day of my life.

So when I started just really, you know, fighting to get this job – and it was not a fight, but it was just a real true understanding of – this is what I was meant to do. Finally I found my niche. I'm not completely Mexican, I'm not completely Chinese. What am I? I'm just from the United States, part of an example of this multicultural melting pot. Well, here I am. This is me and this is something that I want to do.

So I have created a mission for myself when I wrote this strategic plan for the office. I really wanted – you know, my dream when I wrote it was, you know, one of these days, in five years, eight years, ten years, maybe I can go to D.C. and present a model for this. I never expected that three years down the road I would be here talking to you and being invited to speak to the Pentagon, being able to speak here in D.C. about the program. So it's just so exciting to have so much support, to see that D.C. has passed their Language Access Act, and that I'm here to be able to recommend and tell you that it works and that it can happen, that you need to be patient but things can be done.

One thing that I want to just really stress is the importance of internal versus external support. There's so much that we can do internally in the department, to provide the compliance and provide the translation, and just sell these products of language access. We also need your support in telling us, you know, generate this traffic. We need to generate this traffic of people who are LEP's to come and use the services. If we can't create that data internally in our departments, we cannot say, okay, you know, police department, you need to hire 48 more officers that speak Tagalog or French or Russian. We need that data so we cannot – you know, we cannot just invent the number and tell the police chief, well, you know, you need to hire 48 more police officers that speak Russian. So this is an opportunity for us to communicate with you. You tell us the information, we tell you what's going on, and then we work together to make it happen. So that's one thing that we are working in the city of Oakland to do.

We also need to prioritize the language assessment that we do throughout the department. The first thing that we are doing, and we continue to do, is to provide the number of bilingual staff in public contact areas. So that's very, very important. One of the differences between D.C.'s language act and Equal Access ordinance is that in Oakland we're not able to fire or transfer anybody that's currently in those positions. We need to wait until that position is vacant for us to recruit a person that is bilingual. So this is the first time – this coming fiscal year is going to be the first time that we are able to do that. There's going to be 250 people leaving us for retirement purposes and this is going to be an exciting time for our office to actually go out into the community and do specific recruitments for these positions.

The other challenge that we have had is translation of materials. I know that this is something that you already know, that it's not just to translate things in Spanish and Vietnamese and Korean and Chinese. We need to be culturally sensitive because, you know, sometimes we're talking in a language that only the southern portion of a country speaks and not the northern, or not the eastern, and we're talking, you know, we need to talk to a generalized group that will understand the vocabulary. So we're actually

creating glossaries, and this is something that we will share with Ken, creating these glossaries that we can share and maybe, you know, in the future we can share a memory bank with all of these additional vocabulary terminology so that we don't have to go out and translate over and over and over, spend so much resources and funds on translating the same particular forms. So if we have a system like this, we would be able to just share all of this information and really save a lot of money.

We also need to increase the LEP sphere of coming to access the services. I think that you already know that many of our LEP community, if they call on the phone and they are answered in English, they will automatically hang up. So we have to educate others to tell them, you know, if you're going to have a Chinese hotline, it has to be in Chinese. A Spanish hotline has to be in Spanish, so that when people call in they will automatically just feel that we are trying to do our effort, that we want to be able to know what their needs are.

We have created many different projects in the city of Oakland which I want to share with you in order to educate the LEP community into coming to learn about city services, and for example we have been successful in creating a citizens' academy. A citizens' academy is a 14-week session where they come in once a week and we invite different guest speakers from every single department to come and just share with them. It's an open forum. They come in, they sit with us for three hours and we explain to them what is going on in every department, it's a Q&A session, and they are able to learn what they should be doing. For example, you know, who should they report a pothole to, or what should they do if, you know, a neighbor's dog is making too much noise. You know, common things like that that actually I didn't even know when I access the city. So that's one of the things that we have created, and we have one in Spanish, one in Cantonese, and one in English, and we have already established that for the city for the upcoming year.

Another thing that we're working with the police department on is creating citizen's police academies. Again, it's the same concept. Just going in and just understanding what the different police services are. For example, you know, domestic violence, sexual assault, all of those different subjects that we actually don't know what to do when we are faced with that. We have blight academies, blight, what to do with garbage, graffiti, any kind of abandoned cars, et cetera. So again, that is another academy that we also have in Chinese and Spanish that is helping the community be more educated.

We provide a lot of interpretation so we have interpretation equipment. We have interpreters, both certified and uncertified. For example, we have a large group of volunteers who come from senior centers, or from students who are bilingual, and we're using those resources into helping us provide interpretation during business hours. After hours, at hearings and community meetings, we provide interpreters who are certified and who, you know, will be able to help the community.

Before Skip just times me out, I want you to know that, again, just keep focusing on this mission, keep working hard in supporting these wonderful goals, and again, you know, our mission here is to provide the services to those who are in need to become better citizens, better residents, and who are already paying taxes and are in need of these particular governmental services. I thank you so much for your time and I'll be open for questions.

(Applause.)

SHU-PING CHAN: Can you hear me from here? To save time, maybe I'll just – since I'm furthest away from the podium. I'm Shu-Ping Chan from Montgomery County. And LEP is really one piece of a much larger diversity picture in Montgomery County. Montgomery County, Maryland, just for those of you not from this area, is just north and west of Washington, D.C. It's one of the most diverse communities, not unlike Fairfax, not unlike Washington, D.C., not unlike Oakland, California, with about one in eight are LEP. One in eight of the population, about 12 percent of the population is LEP. About 25 percent of the population was born out of the United States. So LEP really is one part of a much larger diversity picture for our county.

Really the groundwork for LEP was established by my colleague who's in the back there, Juana Velasquez Torres during a diversity summit that she helped put together last year, and I inherited a lot of her work and went forward with this project.

In the back and outside is basically a schematic in a salmon color. I don't know if you had a chance to pick that up. If you didn't, you can feel free to pick that up on your way out. It's a schematic of basically what we are doing. We created a couple of entities county-wide to implement LEP policy. One is the department representative. So every director of each department in county government appointed someone to be their LEP representative. We meet every two or three weeks to discuss issues, and the main goal really is to provide us, get a centralized database going of what translations are already done out there and have that in a repository in Montgomery County. We have the Charles Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity, which is what we view as a one-stop shop for LEP, immigrant, new Americans, anybody who comes in, and documents and services are available in different languages in that one center. There's one in Wheaton and there's one in Germantown up in the upper part of the county. So the department reps come together to meet and discuss policy. That's sort of like the executive branch of the LEP team, if you will.

There's a resource team that's almost like the legislative branch. And we being here in Brookings, I like to think of that resource team as the think tank of what we're trying to do. They gather information, gather information from Oakland, from Washington, D.C., from New York City, gather information about best practices and they help set the agendas for the meetings for the department reps. As Mr. Giorgis and Ms. Liu said before, the critical part really is to get the assessments from the community-based organizations and the faith-based organizations.

So a third entity we've created is the stakeholders committee. The stakeholders committee are members of the community – churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, what-have-you – and we go out there and affirmatively ask them, have a questionnaire that says, how are we doing, what other things should we be doing, are there specific communities that we are missing? It might be an isolated community in a certain part of Montgomery County that because of word of mouth, because the barriers are still so strong there that they do not even attempt to access services and there are communities that we might be missing altogether. So from the stakeholders committee, and talking to the grassroots groups and families and organizations, what communities out there are we missing that's totally off our radar screen.

The policy from Montgomery County is that we have a three percent threshold, both from the Maryland state general assembly and both from the federal guidelines, but our policy is really to, if there's an identifiable community, regardless of the size, our role is to break down any barriers to providing access to any identifiable LEP community, whether it's 25 people, whether it's 50 people, whether it's 150 people. So that really is our goal, to go beyond the federal and state guidelines. So that's the stakeholders committee.

And finally, we have training teams where we'll gather people together who have interest in LEP, who have a passion for working with LEP populations, and to go out there, have a schedule of training. I see Washington, D.C. is having the training fairly soon to inform the frontline staff of what LEP policy is. And again, beyond the linguistic aspect of it, I think LEP is really a good vehicle. There's a lot of substance already in LEP in terms of implementation of policy. But it's also a good vehicle to educate, as the mayor said, a change of mindset in the way services are delivered. It really is the way we're trying to do it in Montgomery County.

We've batted around the idea of whether we should have legislation or the County Council should have some ordinance, or the executive have executive regulation on LEP implementation. The conscious decision was not to have that because if there's funding cuts in the future, if there's, you know, somebody doesn't like – the next executive doesn't like, it might be cut. But if we integrate it as a part of good customer service and on the sheet here, what good customer service is one of the guiding principles, one of the nine guiding principles where our county in terms of how we're operating, one is good customer service. Another is appreciating diversity. Another is being accountable and open.

How can you provide good customer service? How can you be open and accountable? How can you provide openness and accessibility if you cannot communicate with your customers? And so we're integrating LEP and the entire thinking of looking to our diverse community in terms of good customer service, integrating it in every aspect of county operations so it is really, as the mayor said, a change of mindset on how we're doing business.

So I invite you to take a look at that and some of the statement of LEP policy from the county, some of the guiding principles. If you have any questions, you know, there's contact information there, and I welcome some of your questions later on. Thank you.

(Applause.)

ANGIE CARRERA: Good morning. As language access coordinator for Fairfax County, I have to say I'm so lucky to have a job that I love, but also which gets so much support from top leadership in county government. Surely without that support I would not have succeeded in the initiatives which have already taken place in the county.

This is probably best expressed by a commitment by the county in our policy. Our policy is that no person shall be denied equal access to county services based on his or her inability or limited ability to communicate in the English language. More importantly is our philosophy that language access is not simply a matter of the Title 6 mandate or any other legislation. As our county executive says, it's simply the right thing to do. What we've decided is that it's a matter of providing quality customer service to all of our customers, regardless of their English language proficiency.

We also are coming to recognize that most of our customers who seem to be limited in their English are actually transitional learners. They are people who are on their way to learning English, at least most of them. Some of them may never learn English, but our obligation as public servants is to provide them with equal service across the board.

I do want to say that to begin our process one of the things we decided to do was to do a second language access survey, and this is the product of that survey. We have done a survey in 1998 which was to agency heads, which proved very fruitful. This was before the creation of the language access team that created my position, and certainly before my position. When I took this position over, however, myself and the people who had worked with me on the previous team decided to create another survey, but this survey had a different audience. This survey was for frontline workers, the people who have the most contact with LEP customers. And I am so glad we did this.

We sent the survey out electronically as well as by paper to over 11,000 employees. We expected a 10 percent return. We got an 18 percent return, and not only – and this is what really excites me about the outcome of the survey – is not only did we get an 18 percent return on the survey, but people wrote volumes. In the two narrative questions at the end, one was, what can top leadership do to help you improve your skills in serving LEP customers? And the last question, which was questions, comments, suggestions, people wrote volumes. Very few people wrote one or two phrases, as is usually the manner of people filling out surveys. They gave ideas, they were critical, they were super-critical, but they also provided a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of information that we would not have gotten otherwise.

Now the survey was anonymous, so that we couldn't trace who sent it in. So people were probably more verbal than normal, but I think that that was a real plus for us because it gave us a view inside of agencies, for those that identified their agencies, but to the county overall as to what kind of barriers employees face in trying to meet our mandate that they should provide quality customer service.

In addition they also had some ideas. Some of the ideas were wonderful, such as increasing bilingual recruitment and retention. Some of them were scary, like, let's just have everybody who speaks another language do all our translations for free. But that also helped us meet employees where they were.

What we did learn from the survey was that the seven big languages in Fairfax County are Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, and Chinese. A lot of people wrote to me that we should have included American sign language, but I leave that to the Office of Equity Program that deals with ADA issues. Hindi and Punjabi followed suit after the seven.

The challenges that we face were mostly around budget, human resources issues, and learning opportunities that people wanted. Implementation was difficult – is difficult mostly because we're talking about over 11,000 employees. Trying to get 11,000 people on the same page is really an issue. We also recognized that every agency is very unique. We have several – many agencies in Fairfax County government to serve over a million people in our population. Rather than have several policies that would – that seem to believe that one size fits all, we instead are working with each agency individually, within our county government, to ensure that they have the tools, they have the knowledge, and they have me as their consultant guide to help them navigate all the issues within their agency.

One of the first things we did after the survey was to create a language access web page. That web page is available to any employee through the use of their computer to determine which vendor – how to access their vendors. Now every agency was given the task of picking a point person, and some of the other panelists have alluded to this as well. Our point person is responsible for setting up an account with the vendors who we have already approved, of which there are eight. Those eight provide interpretation face-to-face, interpretation by telephone, translation of written documents, and bilingual skills assessment.

The last tool will be mostly used of course by supervisors who are either trying to fill a position or promote into a position where bilingual skills are required or preferred. However, the other three services are under the jurisdiction of their agency. So agencies are being told to provide access codes to all their employees within their agency for telephone interpretation. So anybody who gets a call from anybody who doesn't speak English can immediately access a vendor. If the employee doesn't have it on paper in front of them, they can access the information by our Infoweb, which is our internal organization page.

We also created a language access team. That language access team is composed of employees representing departments – each department in their interactions with LEP customers. They of course contribute from an agency perspective, but many of them are also multilingual and multicultural. We also are working on booklets with pictographs and phonetic language. A good example is zoning enforcement right now has just created a booklet for their field personnel, so if they encounter someone who speaks Spanish, and that's our first effort, they can have a person read the question or statement off the booklet, or they themselves can read it phonetically. We figured Spanish would be the easiest so far, and it also has pictograms so we can point to things to ensure that people understand what zoning violations are being related to.

The other thing we're working on is trainings on organizational and agency policies and protocols. I make a number of stops to each agency, talking with their staff about what their issues are and what tools and resources they have currently available. We also have a local government language access coordinators' meeting just about every quarter. Those are for language access coordinate –well, people who are responsible for language access, though they may not have the title, in other Northern Virginia jurisdictions. So far we have seated Alexandria, Loudon County, Prince William County, Arlington, Fairfax, of course, and Falls Church city, and so we meet. We are also involved with JLARC survey from the state of Virginia.

One of the issues that we have in the state of Virginia that I'm sure maybe Maryland has as well is the concern with the printing of state documents. In Virginia we were told by the state when I worked at juvenile court that – we were asked not to translate state documents, that they would be responsible for those. And frankly, while I was there it didn't happen. So I'm hoping that in future dealings with Virginia state, and of course the counties in Maryland, that Maryland state and Virginia state take some responsibility for helping determine translation of documents that they may not want us to translate in our counties or cities.

The things that are coming up for us is translation verification teams. We all know that when something gets translated by a non-professional, that non-professional is translating from their own perspective, their own regionalism, their own dialect and their own world of knowledge, whatever that may be, and that's caused several concerns in county, city and state government. What we're encouraging in Fairfax County is that all documents for public distribution be done by a certified or qualified interpreter by one of our vendors. However, we're then asking each agency to constitute a translation verification team composed of bilingual employees, and perhaps community volunteers, to review material to see that it is still true to the author's intent.

I have worked with translation verification teams, having created them at juvenile court in my prior life, and I think that that helps us justify material once it steps out into the public arena. We are also creating a LINK-US program. A Link-us program in Fairfax County will be launched in the fall, and it will provide telephone interpretation for short-term and status ID calls. That is, a call where we're simply trying to determine or identify what that customer's need is, and then that call will be referred to a bilingual

county employee who is a staff person in that area, or to a monolingual staff employee who will be connected with a certified or qualified interpreter from one of our vendors.

We found in our survey that I believe it's 45 percent of the calls or interactions we have are of a simple or non-complex nature – people trying to get directions or make an appointment. So we feel that this program will help offset that and will allow agencies to provide more of their funds to be put into the expense column for use by our vendors.

So we have a lot of work ahead of us still. We have a lending library where we provide the transmitter equipment so that groups of people who speak different languages can attend public forum meetings. And we have videos that we can lend out to agencies. So we have a lot of work still in Fairfax. We of course want to be able to work with our counterparts in other counties and cities, and I certainly hope that you'll have lots of questions for me. But if you don't have them now, you are free to contact me at angie.carrera@fairfaxcounty -- all one word – dot gov. My last name is C-a-r-r-e-r-a. I only have one r toward the end of my name. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. McKOY: All right. I have several questions that have been submitted. I want to kick it off to a question to the non-DC panelists. Can you identify a practice or a lesson that has been most influential in helping you sustain the program? Not getting it going but sustaining it.

MS. CARRERA: I would say in Fairfax County that the employees really have a vested interest in making things work, and getting them involved and being active participants in the process and in the development of protocols is key to any success.

MS. LIU: I want to add to that. In the city of Oakland, something that has definitely worked for us is just to be able to communicate with both city council, the mayor, the city manager, and with department heads. And so constantly just keeping Equal Access on their plate on a monthly basis. What are we doing, what's the status, this is happening, this is coming up. I mean, just any little tidbit of information. It doesn't have to be anything major, but just saying, we had a hearing last week and we were able to provide interpreters. Success stories like that. Or little challenges also. You know, we were faced with a translation problem, we had this happen, we were able to solve it this way. Just keep Equal Access, the information coming to them so that they keep it –

MR. CHAN: Yes, I think part of what we're trying to do in Montgomery County is to convey the importance of LEP rather than making it a federal or state mandate, and appreciate the fact that many jurisdictions have – local jurisdictions have passed ordinances. But we see that employees don't – most of the time don't want to be sort of threatened or have a cloud of litigation by HHS or something over their heads, but sort of making it almost part of their daily lives, that we recognize the demographics of Montgomery County. In the school system there is not one racial group that is a

majority. It's a plurality in the school system in Montgomery County. I'm pretty sure in Fairfax that it is too.

MS. CARRERA: Um hmm.

MR. CHAN: In terms of the general population, I mean 40 percent of the population is, quote unquote, minority. So we're moving toward that way, as it will be in California very shortly, that there is no majority population. What does that mean in terms of how we provide services, just as social and academic, intellectual environment that we live in in Montgomery County on a day-to-day basis. I mean, demographers will tell us the two trends that will affect us for the next 50 years is the aging of America as the population grows, the baby boomer population grows and retires, and then the growing diversity. In the Washington, D.C. area I think we attract a lot of talented people from all over the world because it is the nation's capitol, where in the home countries that if you're educated, if you're part of the cultural sort of, you know, elite, you are always in the capitol city. So I think the attraction of – part of the attraction here is that this is the nation's capitol so people come here for many, many reasons.

So that this is going to be part of our lives for the next 20, 30, 40, 50 years. It's not – we don't see it as sort of a mandate. We don't see it as sort of a, you know, somebody's going to sue you if you don't provide the LEP services that's from – in an environment that's friendly to LEP population. So the training teams are so important, that we bring the information about the policies and the guidelines and the federal executive orders and all of that, but also to make it personalized, that we bring folks like me who came to this country as an LEP person, who didn't speak a word of English, and bring these stories, personalized stories that this person was able to get help because somebody helped guide them through the system.

One of my best friends when I was in second grade when I first came here was a family from Scotland. To this day my mother still doesn't quite understand what my friend's mother says because she has a heavy Scottish brogue. But what did George Bernard Shaw say? Great Britain and the United States, two great countries separated by a common language. I mean, we see that all the time. Spanish is not Spanish. My Spanish is not your Spanish, my English is not your English, so we need to sort of, you know, understand that. It's not just a linguistic barrier. It's understanding of where you're coming from, I think, that's really important, so we're conveying that importance, that all human beings, that although you might look a little different, you might speak with a heavier accent, or different accent, let's say. Everyone has an accent. That we are here to provide services, and it's important.

I mean, if you are a government employee, you're not there to make money. You're there to provide a service. If you're there to make money, you do what my former colleague did, go on to the grounds of the private sector. You are here to provide a service, good customer service is what we're all about, and this is part of the customer service for any large organization, whether it's government, whether it's a nonprofit, whether it's a corporation and we take a paying job in the corporate world. You need to

know who your customers are, you need to know what their needs are, you need to know what your resources are, and you need to know how to deliver your resources, your product, your service, whatever it might be, in the most effective way that keeps your customers in business. Keeps you in business and gets your customers the services and the products that they need.

MR. McKOY: Okay. Thank you. I've got about 20 cards here, so I'm going to try and get answers to them. I'm going to encourage the panelists to remember I've got about 20 cards here. (laughter)

All right. What is the budget allocation for the implementation of the Language Access Act, and why not more? I assume that's directed to D.C., but it would be interesting to hear what the budgets are of some of the others. So why don't we have some of our D.C. panelists address that.

MR. SAUNDERS: The budget is $300,000 for this fiscal year and for next fiscal year. Why isn't it more? That's what the bill allocated. I know I was going to have – I was sitting in on some of the budget sessions. They wanted more money for it. With the budget shortfall that we had for this year, that's where we are, so we have to make do with the $300,000.

MR. McKOY: Any of the other jurisdictions want to –

MS. CARRERA: In Fairfax County I think most people assume we have a big pot of gold over in the office of the county executive, but I've had to give them the sad truth that every agency is responsible for its own language access budget, and clearly – (one participant applauds; laughter) – and clearly some of them were more prepared than others. The budgets – I don't have the real numbers, really depend on the size of the agency, the number of their programs, and also the particular populations that they're needing to serve. For example, the health department serves a larger range of languages than, let's say, tax and zoning enforcement. So their budget may be very different. But we're leaving it to the agencies. But in the next budget cycle that will probably be a very prominent line item.

MR. CHAN: Well, in Montgomery County we don't have a specific budget. We have a language bank of employees who speak a different language and they have a pay differential. So if you work in Montgomery County and you are certified as a bilingual employee, I think you get a dollar extra an hour, and that – last year that cost the county about $700,000. So that's on a separate specific LEP budget. That's a pay differential.

On top of that is the commercial language line. Last year I think the county was billed about $160,000. So if you add those two up, it's about $860,000, not directly LEP but LEP-related. There's also three health programs that cost the county about $1.8 million for the African-American community, for the Latino community, and for the Asian-American community. So those are some of the numbers that used to be batted around.

MR. McKOY: All right, this is to all the panelists. What are your views toward the use of, quote, "English-only" rule in the area of employment?

MS. : In the area of employment? I'm sorry.

MR. McKOY: Yes.

MR. CHAN: You can speak English only in the workplace?

MR. McKOY: Meaning you have to speak English at the workplace.

MS. CARRERA: I would say that in Fairfax County that that rule would not exist. We serve our customers where they're at. If a foreign-born Farsi speaker comes up to tax admin and needs to speak to someone in Farsi, a Farsi government employee is probably available, or we provide them with telephone service. That's not an issue for Fairfax County, and shouldn't be.

MR. SAUNDERS: I would just say I think when people make statements like that, they have issues. (Laughter) There are some issues I'm just not going to deal with so I can't even get to that level. We have to deal with the population that we have. We have to deal with people the way they come. So if you don't speak Spanish, the people probably aren't talking to you anyway.

MR. McKOY: Are you the –

Q: (Off-mike.)

MS. LIU: What I can say for the city of Oakland, that is an issue regarding human, you know, personnel issues, human resources. Again, that's a separate subject from language access. This is something about either harassment or discrimination, or they're saying, you know, inflammatory words, using a different language against you. That's personnel-related.

MS. CARRERA: Actually I would have to agree. We would refer it in Fairfax County to the Office of Equity Programs, that deals with HR issues such as someone's just speaking Spanish around me, or Korean, or whatever.

MR. CHAN: I don't think that's been an issue in Montgomery County at all. I think the environment is just open and people understand the diversity, that people are comfortable hearing on a regular basis a language other than English among co-workers.

MR. McKOY: All right. Here are two questions from the audience.

Thank you very much for that. Sometimes me reading questions doesn't get at the meaning you intended, and feel free if you're the poser of the question to clarify.

Does D.C. provide hiring/retention incentives to employees who are bilingual? And a follow-on question, do other jurisdictions regionally and in Oakland and New York City include incentives for bilingual/bicultural personnel?

MR. SAUNDERS: At this point we do not. It is something that I have discussed with the city administrator. I know there are quite a few other jurisdictions that do that. Maybe some of the other agencies do it, but it is not part of the act right now.

I would like to clear up one of the budget issues. We don't have a dollar figure. When somebody said $300,000, keep in mind that is just for the administration of the act itself. The actual translation comes out of the existing budget for all of the agencies. I'm working with some individuals right now. Most of our documents are translated. I have a very small entity. We're looking at probably about $25,000.

When I'm saying $300,000, that is really just for the administration of the actual language act and to help subsidize some of the agencies that may be having difficulty in meeting some budget constraints that they have.

MS. LIU: In the city of Oakland we do provide bilingual pay incentives, depending on the language skills. So if the person is only able to speak the language, they receive an additional $75 per pay period. If they are also able to write it then they receive approximately $90 extra per pay period.

MR. McKOY: Okay. Question – yes?

MS. CARRERA: I was just going to say, in Fairfax County we are currently exploring bilingual compensation for areas other than public safety. Up until now usually public safety – that is, the police and fire and rescue – have stipends or some kind of bilingual compensation, but now we'll be exploring that in the next few budgets, and hopefully I'll have new news if I ever come back.

MR. McKOY: Are you the maker of that question?

Q: No. (Off-mike and inaudible) We contacted the State Department to certify multiple language speakers. For anyone certified in any language, or in sign language, we do provide a stipend, which currently is $50 per pay period.

MR. McKOY: Okay, thank you. All right, question about DCLAA. Will you create a mechanism in DC public agencies to document program/service applicants and participants by preferred language?

MR. SAUNDERS: Yes, that is the intention. Right now one of the issues that we're really going to be looking at, because this is the first year we're starting, is that every agency will not have to translate into each of the five designated languages. So we will sit down and work with the agency. But what we will have to do is come up with

some kind of tracking mechanism where we can come back and say, well, we really should be translating into five languages instead of three languages. So that is one of the things that we are coming up with.

Another part of that is the community outreach because a lot of times individuals don't know how to avail themselves to the services because people aren't educating them to let them know that the services are there.

MR. McKOY: All right, here is a non-political one. What's your opinion of Governor Ehrlich's and former Governor Schaefer – this is the state of Maryland, for you out-of-city people – comments that multiculturalism is, quote, "bunk," end quote?

MR. CHAN: Can I take that one since I'm from the state of Maryland? (Laughter) And I actually, before my current job I was director of the former governor's Office on Asian Pacific-American Affairs. For those of you who might not have heard those wonderful four-letter words that our current governor said about multiculturalism, about it being bunk and crap. The best response I've heard to that was one of the radio stations went up to Baltimore to interview somebody, a person on the street, and just put a microphone in this gentleman's face and said, what do you think of the governor's statement that multiculturalism is bunk and crap? And the gentleman responded, what does crap mean? (Laughter) We need to define what that term means.

I think, you know, multiculturalism is not solely a linguistic issue, and I think it got caught up in that, you know. The former governor, Mr. Schaefer, who's the current comptroller, went to a McDonald's and he was frustrated because the person there did not speak sufficient English for his liking and [he] did not receive the service fast enough for his liking, and then he made some comments later on that he was never going to go to McDonald's because he doesn't believe in multiculturalism, everyone should speak English. The governor a few days later on a talk radio show basically added to the former governor's choice statement.

Multiculturalism isn't linguistic. It really should not be solely linguistic. I mean, when you talk about multiculturalism, in my view culture is not a zero-sum game. You do not give up part of your culture upon learning another culture. That really has nothing to do with language. I mean, of course we sometimes get frustrated because we go to a service provider that might not speak the language we speak sufficiently. Right? Yes, that's granted. But we have to recognize, as many people have said, that we take people where they are and everyone's in a transitional mode to full language fluency. We need to define multiculturalism. It doesn't necessarily mean LEP, limited English proficiency.

MR. McKOY: Any of the other panelists? Okay.

All right. How does the act affect a nonprofit organization, especially in regard to its government contracts with the District? So I guess this is a District –

MR. SAUNDERS: I don't know if I really understand the question. I don't think it would really affect the contract. Are we talking about a contract for translation services? Maybe the person that asked the question could elaborate a little bit more and I could answer it more fully.

Q: It's not my question, but as a nonprofit provider I would assume that the question means since we have government contracts, are we held by the law –

[END TAPE 1.]

-- supposed to come to us, regardless of who the nonprofit is. Does the law reach all the way to –

MR. SAUNDERS: So what you're saying, would a nonprofit be held accountable under the law. You know, that is something that we would have to look at and ask court counsel. I do not know, and the people that I have talked to, I do not think it was construed that broadly. What we're talking about right now are District agencies and agencies and departments.

MS. LIU: In the city of Oakland we're moving towards doing that. In our division of contract compliance we are going to be asking for access to our vendors and all the people that are receiving any kind of city benefits.

MS. FATAH: And I want to add to it that anyone who receives a federal grant is governed by the federal requirement that you are required to provide a service to the LEP customers. Whoever that you are serving, in that community you abide by that, and that even though you are not the direct recipient of the grant, you are the sub-grantee, let's say for the Office of Early Childhood Development, that that's why we're working with the community and trying to outreach to all other LEP customers, and trying to recruit them and trying to do – help your capacity.

Q: I just wanted to add that the agency that provides the funding is responsible to assure that service is provided, and while the DC law is there to guide us, to do certain things, there are federal laws that we still have to respond to, and under those Ellen is absolutely right. I think that we need to keep that in mind as we provide the services.

MR. McKOY: All right. On behalf of the Korean-American Business Association I want to thank the committee for understanding the need for this act. When can the merchants expect the forms and documents to be available in Korean?

MR. SAUNDERS: I don't know what agency you may be talking about, maybe DCRA. I am not sure. You can get a copy of the act online and see exactly when that agency is supposed to be in compliance. The good thing about the District, we already have about 31 agencies that are doing this to some degree. But you're more than

welcome to give me a call over at the Office of Human Rights. Say if your agency is not supposed to be in compliance until 2006, we can sit down and talk to the director because I know there are some agencies that have a high proportion of Korean LEP individuals, and maybe we can work and maybe speed up that time.

MR. McKOY: Okay. For Montgomery and Fairfax counties. Do you have legislative support for your LEP plan? If yes, please share it with us, or at least give us some identification where we can get it on the web site. If no, do you see when it will happen?

MS. CARRERA: I don't know that there is legislative support in the state of Virginia from the state. All I can speak to is what I get from the county, and the office of the county exec stands by its policy. It supports its employees by providing my services and tools. We've made a lot of strides this year, so we're just looking to move forward and not worry about legislative issues.

MR. CHAN: Well, in Montgomery County the county council has not passed any legislation requiring any LEP, you know, policy or ordinances, but the Office of the County Executive, on the executive branch we take it as an initiative to make sure that, again, any remaining barriers are broken. We do receive support from the legislative branch. Actually they are providing a 100-page report on how we're doing in terms of the executive branch, and that report should be out in about a month or so. So we do receive oversight and support from the legislative branch, but there's no ordinance in Montgomery County.

MS. CARRERA: In fact I just left out an important component. It's not just the office of our county executive but also our board of supervisors that created the team that created this position. So clearly there is support from the board of supervisors.

MR. McKOY: Okay, this question is for Ellen Fatah. You seem to be ahead of other D.C. agencies in that you said you had taken care of selecting vendors. Question – would you be willing to share this selection process with other D.C. agencies?

MS. FATAH: Well, it was one of the endeavors that we have tried very hard to make sure that the documents that we translate for the customers are of high quality and appropriate. What we have done is that in the Office of Early Childhood Development, as I mentioned before, we have 38 percent of our staff who are bilingual, and in each of the offices – we have four offices. In the Office of the executive director there are three different divisions. Each office has a person identified to be the person responsible for language access. And we have a team, and what we have done is identify the vendors who are currently doing translations in the District of Columbia and ask them to come in to make a presentation. And we did an evaluation based on the language, the document they translate. Actually gave a grade, about what grade did they get in all the languages that we are interested in.

At this time, as I said, we have not been planning to do any translation in Korean because we have identified, based on our statistics, that we do not have any Korean families that come into our office to seek service. So the languages that we are interested in are Spanish, Vietnamese, French, and Amharic.

We have given a grade to the translated document for each vendor and based on that we are going to review and then give out purchase orders, a blanket purchase order for FY '04, and then use kind of performance-based contracting, based on the quality of the document that we have received. Then disseminate to the committee for their decision about the FY '05 contracting process.

MR. McKOY: Thank you. Okay, Deborah Liu, can you talk about what you have – the city of Oakland – done, I think it's with agencies that are not in compliance with the ordinance.

MS. LIU: Luckily enough, all of them are in compliance. What we do – you know, we don't want to be the bad guy of the movie, right? So when we see that something is coming up before any of the reports are written, we have a conversation with the department head. But we really have not had a problem.

MR. McKOY: Okay. Since all D.C. agencies serve the entire community, for the most part, does this mean that we provide vital documents in all languages? Can some languages be phased in first? The questioner mentioned the Oakland threshold process.

MR. SAUNDERS: Well, I think that Oakland has a higher threshold. The District of Columbia has subscribed to the ideal of a lower threshold. So right now basically we are dealing with – and this is in the act – of five languages. I think everybody knows what those languages are. It's either 3 percent or 500 individuals. Keep in mind, every agency will not have to translate into each language. We'll do an assessment, we'll do tracking, but it's really going to be determined by what populations you are serving. There will be some agencies, like EMPD, that are going to have to translate into every language.

MR. McKOY: All right, this one is aimed at Ellen again – no, I'm sorry, this is aimed at you in Oakland, but I think any of you can answer this. You might want to answer it first.

How are interpreters certified in the city of Oakland?

MS. LIU: We have – there are two types of interpreters. We have the certified interpreters that already come to offer their services, already have a certification from the ATA, the American Translator Association, or who have certificates from city colleges or any other kind of entity. We do an assessment. We have a conversation with them, or we make sure that somebody from – in Korean or Japanese, languages that we internally do not speak, can do an assessment of their bilingual skills and then we incorporate them into our team.

But we actually rely most on volunteer – on a volunteer base, on people like you and I who are not certified, who are fluent in a second or third language and then want to donate their time in helping others fill out applications and stuff like that. So we actually rely more on a volunteer base interpreters than on certified, where we don't need to pay them.

MS. CARRERA: Fairfax County has made the determination that for the languages that can be certified – because not all languages can be certified, depending on where you are in the country and what languages are available for certification, that if you can be certified we prefer certification. Qualification being a secondary choice.

Our vendors had to guarantee us that their employees or consultants that they hire to do interpretation or translation were either certified, or if not certified, qualified either through an external program like ATA or an internal program within that company. They had to assure us that they were adequately supervised, and that they had consistent and continual training, both in the language and in the code of conduct for interpreters.

We discourage the use of volunteer interpretation and translation in Fairfax County government, for many reasons, one being bilingual employee morale. In the past we've asked a number of employees to translate documents for us, only to discover that other readers of the document were very dissatisfied. So therefore we created the use of translation verification teams. We also have concerns with having community members translate material because they don't know the internal workings of the agency and the language and terminology used in that agency, which we do expect of the venders that we've hired.

MS. LIU: I just want to clarify. When you say translation and interpretations, it's very specific. For interpretation we're doing verbal oral translation. And translation, the actual word translation is for hard copy materials, written information. So I'm just a little –

MS. CARRERA: We are –

MS. LIU: When you say interpreters are translating –

MS. CARRERA: Well, we don't want volunteers interpreting or translating in the county government.

MR. CHAN: At the employee language bank, I think Montgomery County hired a consultant about 10 or 12 years ago to do the certification process, and then a number of employees were certified through that process, and then these certified employees test other incoming employees and they get certified or not certified, based on this program that was set up about 10 or 12 years ago for the county.

MS. CARRERA: In fact, I would just add that we don't want volunteers doing interpreting or translating outside of a very formal program instituted by the county, and we have a couple but that's not widespread.

MR. McKOY: Tedla?

MR. GIORGIS: We do use some volunteers. The reason is this. For example, if we find a Korean clinician who can help us translate and then also give us some clinical impression, we find that's even more important than simply doing direct translation. So sometimes we have a volunteer list of clinicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, who can provide us with differential diagnosis as well. At least we are able to validate medical impressions. That's one thing.

And I would make a comment on what was being discussed is the language access is one thing, but the issue is, you know, once you make it accessible, and then once they show up at your door, what do you do? How do you make your organization and services acceptable and respected in delivering service? So I hope that this –

MR. McKOY: Let me give you a mike.

MR. GIORGIS: So what I was trying to say is, it's not only making our services accessible. It's also getting engaged in training, and making sure that accessible services are acceptable and effective. Because we know from experience the dropout rate after treatment, after the first show, the dropout rate of ethnic and linguistic minority communities from services is extremely high. It's up to 75 percent. And unless the service delivery, in terms of from a medical standpoint, unless the staff is very much competent in delivering services, they are not going to come back. So that's why we're very, very much engaged above and beyond providing access by providing translation services. It's to make sure that staff is not only informed but also able to deliver effective services.

Just one comment (unintelligible). There are different types of competencies. One you might call information competence. You are informed about the culture, about an issue and so forth. You may even have an analytical competence. You may even have an interpersonal competence where if you see a Latino or Hispanic person you might say, hola, and so forth. You know how to dialogue and develop interpersonal relations. But as a staff member, if you don't have that interventional competence, being able to be able to provide effective services, you are going to lose the person from coming back, and we know there is a high dropout rate from services by ethnic and linguistic minorities in the community.

So I hope while we're making our systems accessible, I hope we are engaged in making our staff competent so that they will keep on coming. I think that's a very important issue.

MR. McKOY: All right, I'm going to use that as a segue to ask one last question of the panelists. That is, give you an opportunity to offer one comment, either a more in-depth reflection on something you've already said, or if you're from out of town, some opportunity or suggestion you have to those implementing the D.C. law. Whatever comment. This is a rare opportunity. Whatever comment you can make in 30 seconds. (Laughter)

MS. LIU: Okay, here are 30 seconds. To me I think it's just a wonderful thing to share with you. People out there who are LEP are so thirsty. They're just so thirsty to share with you their information, their lives, their experiences coming to this country, that when they will find a hotline, a person, a number for them to call in their language, in their fluency language, they're going to pour what happened to them. I mean, if your staff is not trained to just really ask those three particular questions for them to just tell you what they need, you're going to be with them on the phone for at least one hour. (Laughter)

So please be very careful. You want to contract language lines. Remember, it's at least $2 per minute. Don't go there until you have a system, you have trained your staff, and you're able to just ask those particular three questions to know what they need before they pour out all of their life history to you.

MR. McKOY: Thank you.

MS. FATAH: My 30 minute request is – (laughter) – my request is addressed to the Office of Latino Affairs and the Office of Asian-Pacific Islander Affairs. I think on behalf of all the language access coordinators, it would be very beneficial if those two offices establish a specific glossary about a specific translation for different terms. So uniform, across the board, it will be extremely helpful to the agency as well as to the community.

MR. McKOY: Thank you.

MS. CARRERA: Create a collaborative leadership. Get your employees involved at a very first door basis. Make sure your community is involved. Work with them. Set up collaborations cross-agency so that you don't have stovepipes working in their own little worlds but who are willing to create levels of leadership among all their employees. I think that's really key to success.

MR. McKOY: Thank you.

MR. CHAN: Following what the Mayor said, it really is a change of mindset in the way of doing business across all, you know, government agencies. When you do the training, bring in someone who, as Ms. Liu said, bring in someone who's a success story, someone who had been an LEP customer and now, you know, uses the services well. I think those are warm stories and just reveals what America is all about. And even the most staunch, I think, anti-immigrant or anti-LEP groups cannot fight the fact that, you

know, this is part of the American spirit, that we welcome those from other parts of the world. I mean, even the most anti-immigrant opponents would, I guess, get a little warm feeling in their heart that this is what America is all about, welcoming those from other shores and then perpetuating a new generation of new Americans.

MR. McKOY: Thank you.

MR. GIORGIS: I'll repeat myself again. It's not only helping them come to your door and to your office. What do you do once they are sitting there and asking you for help. If you don't know exactly what you're doing, if you're not culturally competent, you might as well not be there because they are not coming back. So you really, really have to get engaged in training your staff, making sure that they are competent. I'm not talking about sensitivity here. Their competencies are up to par with clinical standards and good service delivery.

(Applause.)

MR. McKOY: Thank you.

MR. SAUNDERS: I think I would just say what I said at the beginning. When this act was passed, it was the community, it was Council, it was the District government all working together, and that's what it's going to take to really succeed. This is something that's new, even if you're looking at Oakland, so there are going to be speed bumps on the way. But we all have to work together. And that's all I have.

MR. McKOY: Before we thank our panelists, which I'm going to ask us to do, I've been asked to read an announcement which is pertinent to today's forum. There's going to be an introductory training language access compliance for individuals with limited English proficiency. It's for DC government agency directors and language coordinators. It's going to be on July – not June – July 22nd, 8:30 to 12:30 at the Reeve Center, on the 2nd floor. That's July 22nd, 8:30 to 12:30, the Reeve Center, on the second floor. And many of the organizations participating today are sponsoring.

Now, can we give a resounding round of applause of thanks for our panelists.

(Applause.)

MS. SINGER: I just want to take the real last 30 seconds and also thank Skip McKoy and our panelists for being here, for giving us sort of the meat and the blood and the guts of what they've been doing and what we are about to embark on here in D.C. And I want to thank my colleagues at Brookings for helping to make this happen, and our colleagues in the D.C. government, particularly the Office of Latino Affairs and Office of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs, the Mayor, Councilman Jim Graham, Alice Rivlin. Thanks to everyone for being here.

(Applause.)

(End of session.)