



**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** May 4, 2017

**TO:** Government Audit and Oversight Committee  
Board of Supervisors President London Breed  
Supervisor Jane Kim  
Supervisor Aaron Peskin

**FROM:** Micki Callahan  
Human Resources Director 

**SUBJECT:** 170312: Hearing on Implementation of and Compliance with the Language Access Ordinance

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The Department of Human Resources (DHR) role in implementing the City's Language Access Ordinance is three-fold:

1. We negotiate the City's labor contracts, which provide employees with bilingual pay for hours spent using their language skills at work
2. We test bilingual proficiency for most departments and "certify" employees at a customer service level in the language they use for work
3. We oversee the use of language special conditions for positions. Special conditions require anyone in the position to possess the requisite skill set. Special conditions also have implications during layoffs.

DHR respectfully submits the following comments on the subject hearing:

DHR believes in and supports the City's LAO. Our goals include ensuring DHR's processes are effective and expedient. Over the past two years we have partnered with the Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) to realize our goals, and will continue to do so. One of the key changes we've implemented is using technology to minimize the time departments wait to get staff certified in another language.

We now use a video platform and remote scoring to speed up testing and certification. Testing for the following languages is available using this method:

- Cantonese
- Filipino
- Japanese
- Mandarin
- Russian
- Spanish
- Vietnamese

Testing via this method is available for the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD), as well as other City departments.

The SFPD can use language as a factor in hiring entry-level police officers. DHR implemented a continuous testing program for entry level officers several years ago. One of two desirable qualifications added to the exam when the new process was adopted by the Civil Service Commission is, "Proficiency in a second language relevant to San Francisco communities." SFPD has the flexibility to choose anyone on the police officer eligible list, and can use proficiency in a second language as the justification for selecting one candidate over another.

Hiring entry-level officers who speak different languages helps ensure the department's capacity continues to increase as officers are promoted over time, and new officers are hired.

Finally, changes to the LAO that would impact employee pay may be a subject of bargaining, so DHR will work with its labor partners in this area.

Please contact DHR Chief of Policy Susan Gard at 415-551-8942 or [susan.gard@sfgov.org](mailto:susan.gard@sfgov.org) if you have any questions or we can provide additional information.