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# COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON THE CITY'S LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICES

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Presented by

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on behalf of the Language Access Network of San Francisco



**LANSF**

LANGUAGE ACCESS NETWORK

OF SAN FRANCISCO



# Introduction



- Since 1969, CAA has been steadfast in its commitment to defend the civil rights of Chinese Americans and advance multiracial democracy. We provide direct services in economic justice (i.e., access to benefits and job opportunities), immigration (i.e., status renewals and legal assistance), and community navigation.
- Since 2009, African Advocacy Network provides immigration legal services to the growing diaspora of African and Afro-Caribbean immigrants and provides services in more than 10 languages.

# Language Access Network of San Francisco (LANSF)



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LANSF is comprised of the following 6 community-based organizations:

- African Advocacy Network
- Arab Resource and Organizing Center
- \* Chinese for Affirmative Action
- Central American Resource Center - SF
- People Organizing to Demand Environmental & Economic Rights (PODER)
- South of Market Community Action Network (SOMCAN)

\* CAA is the lead and fiscal agency of LANSF

# Barriers in accessing public services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) residents in San Francisco

- Since 2012, the Language Access Network of San Francisco (LANSF) has documented countless challenges that community members with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) face when accessing city services.
- Being LEP, or speaking English “less than very well,” means you are more likely to have lower incomes, be uninsured, face poor health status, and experience discrimination within the healthcare system compared to English speakers.
- It also means patients with LEP experience worse emergency department outcomes, longer wait times, and limited bilingual staff to assist them.

# Common Language Access Issues Identified & Experienced

- Lack of quality control of interpretation and translation
- Often long wait times
- Over-reliance on telephonic interpretation/third party services and the questionable quality of that interpretation
- Over-reliance and expectation that community members bring their own interpreter
- Lack of cultural relevance in providing services in-language
- Systemic issues that lead to recurring LAO violations within the same departments
- The link between language access gaps and the digital divide
- The unique needs of community members speaking emerging languages (non-certified languages)



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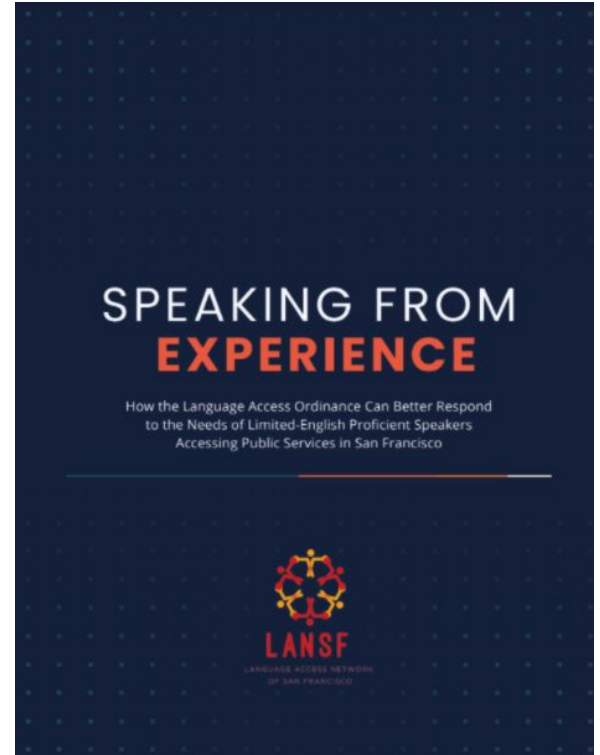
# What does LANSF do?

LAN's mission is to advance language justice by educating, building power, and advocating with immigrant communities to overcome and dismantle language barriers.

- Community Education
- Assessing and Gathering Data on Community Language Access Needs
  - Spot Checks
  - Narratives data collection
  - Documenting and sharing best practices
- Support for City Agencies & Departments
  - Meet with agencies to discuss language access needs and practices
  - Emergency language access situations

# LAN Community Assessment Findings

- LANSF Community Assessment released in 2021
- Key Findings
  - Departments are not fully implementing and complying with the LAO
  - Insufficient enforcement & unfunded mandate
  - The LAO does not guarantee access for non-threshold languages
- Key Recommendations
  - Strengthen enforcement strategies
  - Increase community engagement
  - Better provide for non-threshold languages

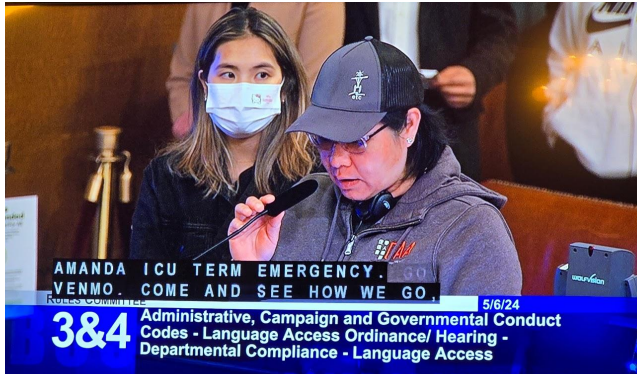


# Updated Language Access Ordinance (LAO) Amendments

- Expanded language rights for San Francisco residents:
  - Right to be served in the language you are most comfortable with
  - Right to telephonic interpretation and written translation for all languages
  - Reasonable turnaround times for written translation requests for all languages
- Lowers the threshold for certified languages:
  - Lowers the threshold from 10,000 to 6,000 residents with LEP within 2 years (January 2026: Vietnamese will be a required language)
- Expanded accountability and oversight mechanisms:
  - Translate and publish the know-your-rights brochure about the LAO complaint process in the top 20 most spoken languages
  - OCEIA will perform annual audits of departments for compliance
  - OCEIA will submit quarterly compliance reports to the BOS and IRC.



# Language Access Ordinance (LAO) Resolution



A LAO Resolution passed on June 11. Commits OCEIA to a community-engaged process to develop the following:

- LAO Complaint form translated into the top 20 languages
- Best practices for hiring and retention of qualified bilingual city staff
- Increase community employment opportunities (i.e. language bank)
- Best practices for the Board of Supervisors to define adequate departmental investment in language services
- SFPUC will include live translation on all utility bills in the required languages

# Increased threats towards immigrants and language rights requires urgent local response

- Unprecedented attacks on immigrant communities through aggressive federal immigration enforcement, increased detention and deportation, and threats to San Francisco's sanctuary status.
- Chilling effect and heightened fears keep immigrant families disconnected from city services and civic processes.
- Federal actions to undo federal language access requirements and require English proficiency for certain sectors hurts LEP residents' ability to seek federal services and employment opportunities.



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# San Francisco's budget must reflect its commitment to all residents—regardless of what language they speak

- Language Access Investments:
  - We respectfully ask the Committee to prioritize **\$5.8 million** in funds for OCEIA and all departments to properly implement the new language access amendments— amendments that will help all residents participate in their community and ensure that every person has access to safety net services.
  - We respectfully ask the Committee to maintain **\$900,000** in funds for two-years for the Language Access Network to continue to serve as a bridge between immigrant communities and their government, provide culturally-competent information and resources, improve city language access delivery, and connect residents to essential services.
- Building Language Access Leadership:
  - We respectfully ask the Committee to use the annual departmental budget presentation process to invite Departments to discuss their commitment to language access service provision for each upcoming fiscal year.



# THANK YOU!

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