



SHAMANN WALTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

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*****PRESS RELEASE: SAN FRANCISCO SUPERVISOR SHAMANN WALTON AND COMMUNITY ADVOCATES URGE MAYOR LURIE TO FULLY FUND LANGUAGE ACCESS IN SAN FRANCISCO*****

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – Today, the Language Access Network and Supervisor Shamann Walton held a press conference and hearing at the San Francisco Board of Supervisors Budget and Appropriations Committee to urge Mayor Daniel Lurie to fully fund language access services as the federal government steps up its attacks against San Francisco and its residents.

Last year, the Board of Supervisors took a critical step by unanimously passing amendments to strengthen San Francisco's Language Access Ordinance. These amendments expanded protections to include emerging languages such as Vietnamese and strengthened requirements for city departments to serve limited English proficient residents. However, the implementation of these changes remains incomplete as a result of insufficient funding while the City faces a budget deficit.

The San Francisco Budget and Legislative Analyst anticipates that departments will need \$5.8 million in order to realize the vision behind the Language Access Ordinance's amendments. This will require the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors to increase investment in language access for a total of \$22.9 million to ensure all city departments have the resources necessary to implement new language rights for our communities.

San Francisco is home to thousands of limited English proficient (LEP) residents who speak languages such as Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and others. One in three San Francisco residents identifies as an immigrant and 18.9% of residents identify as limited English proficient. Without adequate language services, these residents face barriers to basic city services from calling 911 to applying for affordable housing to accessing government-issued identification. In an age of Trump, immigrant communities cannot rely on the federal government, so safety requires that local governments step in to fill the gap.



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“Every San Franciscan—regardless of the language they speak—deserves to be heard, understood, and included,” said District 10 Supervisor Shamann Walton. “Our immigrant communities are essential to the cultural fabric and economic strength of San Francisco, and we must ensure that everyone can fully participate in city processes. Last year, the Board passed and adopted critical amendments to the Language Access Ordinance through a collaborative effort between our office, Supervisor Chan, the Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs, the Immigrant Rights Commission, the Language Access Network, and dedicated community advocates. This year, in light of a significant budget deficit, we are pushing to ensure there is funding to implement these amendments. Funding is the next crucial step to fulfill San Francisco’s promise as a truly inclusive city, and we will continue working with our Mayor and city departments to deliver high-quality language access services for all.”

“Equity for immigrant communities lies in language access, educational outreach, and access to public services,” said District 9 Supervisor Jackie Fielder. “Language Access Network of San Francisco has been key to that work by advocating to strengthen the Language Access Ordinance and ensuring we improve our language access services to all immigrant communities. And in uncertain times for our immigrant communities, it is imperative the City of San Francisco continues to uplift and protect them and these services.”

“The Southeast Asian Development Center is proud to join the Language Access Network of San Francisco at this important moment,” said Ratha Chuon, Director of Program at the Southeast Asian Development Center. “Recognizing Vietnamese as a certified language is long overdue and especially critical as the community continues to face challenges related to food insecurity, mental health, safety, and economic mobility. This is even more meaningful as we mark 50 years since the Vietnamese community resettled in the Tenderloin and made San Francisco their home after the Vietnam War. Funding the LAO amendments will help ensure equitable access to vital services.”

“San Francisco has long claimed to be a city for all — a place where immigrants can thrive,” said Annette Wong, Managing Director of Programs at Chinese for Affirmative Action. “But those promises ring hollow if residents who are limited English proficient can’t access critical services, exercise their rights, or be heard in the language they understand best. Language access is not an optional service — it’s a civil right. It’s about safety. It’s about dignity. The City needs



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to fund the departments to provide language access as a fundamental right to protecting immigrants under Trump.”

“Our community members are fearful during this time because deportations and disappearances occur more frequently,” said Silvia Ramos, Social Services Manager at CARECEN SF. “It is more important now than ever to ensure that our communities have access to the protection services they need in their own language. Because the Language Access Ordinance is in force, we must ensure that frontline city workers offer the public the interpretation services as required under the Language Access Ordinance.”

“The Filipino community is facing a high level of uncertainty and a rapidly-changing landscape, so community members need to be aware of what resources and services are available,” said Angelica Cabande, Executive Director of South of Market Community Action Network. “Without language access, they will not be able to access these services during critical times. Having accurate and up-to-date information is now more important than ever.”

“The Immigrant Rights Commission has championed language access since its inception, recognizing that all San Franciscans deserve equitable access to city services and the ability to fully participate in their local government,” said Sarah Souza, Chair of the Immigrant Rights Commission. “Since the original Language Access Ordinance in 2001, we have remained deeply committed to uplifting the voices and needs of our diverse monolingual communities, who are an essential part of San Francisco’s fabric. Today, we are pleased to stand with city leaders and the community as we take another important step toward strengthening language access for all.”

San Francisco’s Language Access Ordinance was originally enacted in 2001 as the Equal Access to Services Ordinance in response to findings that many state entities were not in compliance with California’s Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act. It was renamed the Language Access Ordinance in 2009 and amended in 2015 and 2024 to strengthen its provisions. The most recent amendments, introduced by Supervisor Walton and the Language Access Network, were adopted unanimously in 2024.

Key 2024 Amendments Include:

- Lowering the certification threshold for LEP populations from 10,000 to 6,000 individuals, adding Vietnamese as a certified language.



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- Requiring translated signage and digital content across departments.
- Mandating 48-hour response windows to public translation requests.
- Creating a multilingual “Know Your Rights” brochure in the top 20 languages.

The Language Access Network of San Francisco (LANSF) is a coalition of community-based organizations funded by the Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA). The Network works to educate communities about language access rights, monitor implementation of the LAO, and provide community-informed recommendations on best practices. Members include:

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

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