

Good Afternoon to the Police Commission. I understand that at the Police Commission meeting on Wednesday Feb. 04, there will be discussion of SFPD Department General Order 5.20 regarding language access services for limited English proficient individuals. Since I am unable to be present at that time to make public comments, I will give my feedback online.

My feedback is that the Police Commission should vote no, and should not advance the current version of the Departmental General Order, which does not come out of a community informed process. I'd rather that the Commission issue a decision to require revising and amending the policy to be closer to the community working group version.

As you know, the Department General Order is how SFPD officers implement the City's Language Access ordinance. This Order has not been updated since 2007, nearly 2 decades ago. An important guideline, but sadly out of date.

As a bilingual nurse working in this lovely and diverse city which we all enjoy, I know from personal experience that San Francisco is gloriously linguistically diverse, with 20% of the city's population speaking a language other than English at home. Truly wonderful! But in health as well as in legal issues, it is a human right and a humane necessity to be able to understand important information and to appropriately relay back your own understandings and preferences. When the SFPD does not provide excellent and appropriate language access, it is not meeting its mission of protection and of standing for safety with respect for all, nor is it engaging in just, transparent, unbiased and responsive policing.

Other police forces which serve other major cities with large non-English speaking populations, (the NYPD, the LAPD, the Denver and the Chicago Police Departments) have readily adopted comprehensive language access plans. If San Francisco's police department decides to move forward with the non-community informed version of the DGO, without a strong language access policy, the SFPD would be out of step with other major international cities, and also out of step with current best practices.

Without an appropriately updated language access policy, SFPD officers may turn to a child or a family member for language interpretation. That really could throw a wrench in family dynamics. It would be especially dangerous in the case of a domestic violence incident.

The Language Access Network and Chinese for Affirmative Action, in conjunction with OCEIA and former police officers, worked collectively on an updated version of the DGO. Instead of using the version created by that close-to-the-problem body, the SFPD decided to rely on anonymous public comments. It created a vaguely written, hard to enforce policy. It would seem to disregard the immigrant-serving organizations who raised valid and reasonable concerns. It appears disrespectful and shows a lack of concern for the needs of the city's non-English language dominant population.

I ask that the Police Commission vote NO on that version, and require SFPD to sit, to listen, and to revise and amend the document to be closer to the community working group version.

Thank you for your humane attention.

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