

February 1, 2023

City Council Bill 22-0137R - Informational Hearing - Hiring Initiatives - Spanish Speaker

Position: Support With Amendment

Dear Baltimore City Council,

As leaders of Baltimore's Asian American community, we commend this effort to improve language access. We believe that ensuring that all city residents can access services should be a high priority.

That said, residents who do not speak English in Baltimore speak a multitude of languages, not just Spanish. Promoting the hiring of Spanish-speaking employees is helpful, but language barriers for additional groups—such as Asian Americans—must also be recognized.

The Asian American community in Baltimore is often overlooked for their language needs due to structural issues, such as their diverse linguistic backgrounds and the model minority myth. Over 3,000 Baltimoreans who speak an Asian language do not speak English, with many residing in central Baltimore and many more contributing to the city's economy through businesses and work.

We encourage the creation of equitable systems to address the needs of non-English speakers in general. Even with bilingual staff, the people we work with face difficulties accessing systems not designed for all, especially impacting Asian Americans who are impacted by hate crimes and business concerns.

Baltimore City must prioritize measures that will provide equal access to city services and resources for all residents, regardless of language background.

Thank you for considering our perspective on this issue. We look forward to working with you to overcome language barriers for all residents in Baltimore.

Joe Nam Do

Asian Real Estate Professionals

Alexandria Liu

Association of Baltimore Chinese

Young Ran Chang Smith

The League of Korean Americans / Greenmount Senior Center