



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION

San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission

Full Commission Meeting

February 13, 2023 at 5:30 pm PST

Online: <https://sfgov.webex.com/sfgov/j.php?MTID=m1ebb970cd6a7792d6c67d99ae36cd11d>

Phone: 1-415-655-0001 /Access code: 2481 146 3543

Note: As authorized by California Government Code Section 54953(e) and the Mayor's 45th Supplement to her February 25, 2020 emergency proclamation, this meeting will be held remotely without providing a physical location. Members of the Immigrant Rights Commission will participate and vote by video. Members of the public may observe the meeting and provide public comment online. View [instructions](#) for providing public comment.

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chair Kennelly called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m.

Present: Chair Kennelly (left at 7:23 p.m.), Commissioners Chaudhary, Enssani, Gaime, Latt, Obregon, Rahimi, Ricarte, Souza, Wang.

Not present: Vice Chair Paz (excused), Commissioner Ruiz (excused), Commissioner Senghor.

OCEIA staff present: Director Rivas, Commission Clerk Shore, Operations and Grants

Administrator Chan, Spanish Language Specialist Cosenza, Filipino Language Specialist Borres.

2. **Ramaytush Ohlone Land Acknowledgment**

This item is to allow the Commission Chair to acknowledge that the Commission is on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone who are the original inhabitants of the San Francisco Peninsula.

Chair Kennelly read the land acknowledgement statement.

3. **General Public Comment**

This item is to allow members of the public to address the Commission on matters that are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Commission and that do not appear on today's agenda.

OCEIA received interpretation requests for Spanish and Filipino for this meeting, and provided instructions in English, Spanish, and Filipino on how to access interpretation services and make public comment.

There was no public comment.

4. Welcoming Director Rivas (Chair Kennelly and Vice Chair Paz)

This item is to allow the Chair and Vice Chair to welcome new OCEIA Director Jorge Rivas, and to allow Director Rivas to make brief remarks.

Chair Kennelly welcomed Jorge Rivas, the new director of OCEIA and secretary of the Immigrant Rights Commission, and invited him to make remarks. Director Rivas introduced himself and provided an overview of his background and career. He thanked Deputy Director Whipple for his leadership as acting director of OCEIA and acting secretary of the Commission. Chair Kennelly called for public comment, and there was no public comment on this item.

5. Action Item: Approval of previous minutes

(Discussion/Action)

- a. Approval of January 9, 2023 Full Commission Meeting Minutes
Discussion and possible action to approve the minutes of the Immigrant Rights Commission's January 9, 2023 Full Commission meeting. Explanatory document: [IRC Full Commission Minutes - January 9, 2023](#)

Commissioner Souza motioned to approve the January 9, 2023 Full Commission meeting minutes, seconded by Commissioner Wang. Chair Kennelly called for public comment, and there was no public comment on this item. The minutes were approved unanimously by the 10 Commissioners present.

6. Language Access Compliance Report and Community Input on Language Access

(Information/Discussion)

- a. 2023 Language Access Compliance Summary Report (Director Rivas)
This item allows OCEIA staff to provide a brief overview of the 2023 Language Access Compliance Summary report, which evaluates City departments' compliance with the Language Access Ordinance. The report was sent to the Immigrant Rights Commission on February 1, 2023.

Director Rivas provided a brief overview of the 2023 Language Access Compliance Summary Report, which he submitted to the Commission on February 1, 2023. The annual report evaluates City departments' compliance with the Language Access Ordinance. This year's report includes features on the work of the City's language access grantees, the City's Digital Accessibility and Inclusion Standard, and a new language

assistance tool. Director Rivas thanked OCEIA staff for their work on the report.

b. Invited Speakers

This item allows members of community organizations to speak briefly about language access gaps, needs, and issues they have observed in the communities they work with, and to provide any recommendations on how the City can improve its language services.

1. Winnie Yu, Self-Help for the Elderly
2. Language Access Network and SOMCAN

Chair Kennelly introduced the speakers and asked them to share the language access needs they observe in the communities they work with, and recommendations on how the City can improve its language services.

1. Winnie Yu, Self-Help for the Elderly

Winnie Yu, director of programs and administration for Self-Help for the Elderly, noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic, community members needed in-language information on health, pandemic response, recovery, and reopening. Focus groups that reached out to elder San Franciscans were not linguistically accessible and many elders face technological barriers. She discussed the staffing crisis in the city, and the lack of health care interpreters. She noted that seniors need to receive in-language services, and recommended using innovative models to develop a multilingual workforce pipeline to meet this need.

2. Language Access Network and SOMCAN

Members of the Language Access Network and SOMCAN presented a Powerpoint presentation on language access needs and recommendations.

a. Crystal Van, Chinese for Affirmative Action

Crystal Van of Chinese for Affirmative Action thanked Commissioners, welcomed the new director, and thanked OCEIA for the 2023 Language Access Compliance Summary Report. She introduced the Language Access Network of San Francisco (LANSF) and provided an overview of the presentation's three components: community trends of language access at different City departments, policy gaps and challenges with the Language Access Ordinance, and recommendations to address those gaps.

b. Mouneissa Wangara, African Advocacy Network

Mouneissa Wangara of African Advocacy Network provided an overview of the Language Access Network of San Francisco (LANSF). LANSF has worked with OCEIA since

2012 to provide community education on language access, help Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals know and assert their language rights, document their experiences accessing City services, and support community members in finding a path of recourse for violations of the Language Access Ordinance. LANSF also conducts spot checks of City departments' language services and acts as a resource to City departments.

b. Angelica Cabande, SOMCAN

Angelica Cabande provided an overview of SOMCAN. SOMCAN has been funded by OCEIA since 2017 to create a report on barriers and needs of Filipino LEP residents, train Filipino interpreters and translators, provide outreach and education to Filipino LEP community members about their language rights, and create a Filipino resource guide for newcomer immigrants.

c. Silvia Ramos, CARECEN

Silvia Ramos, who works for CARECEN's family wellness program, provided an overview of community members' experiences with the Language Access Ordinance. Among the concerns she discussed were quality control, long wait times, over-reliance on telephone interpretation, expectations that community members bring their own interpreter, and needs of community members who speak non-threshold languages. She noted that some community members are reluctant to seek services due to language barriers or fear of immigration enforcement activities. She discussed the need to address systemic issues that lead to recurring LAO violations, prioritize emergency services, and address the digital divide.

d. Deema Hindawi, Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC)

Deema Hindawi of the Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC) discussed challenges of the Language Access Ordinance. She stated that the policy is not aligned with the target population, and noted that its monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, enforcement, incorporation of community stakeholders, and provisions of language services for non-threshold languages are insufficient.

e. Nicholas Gee, Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA)

Nicholas Gee, an advocate with Chinese for Affirmative Action and Stop AAPI Hate, provided recommendations for reforming the Language Access Ordinance. He recommended that OCEIA publish the LAO complaint form, know your rights information, and an overview of the complaint process in the 20 most-spoken languages of San Francisco; add information about how to provide feedback and file a complaint on required signage about the LAO; and strengthen investigations into possible LAO

violations. He suggested that City departments submit language access plans to the Mayor's Office for approval, rather than to OCEIA; and include their real and projected expenditures on language access. He also recommended conducting regular, independent audits of City departments' compliance with the LAO.

f. Amy Aguilera, PODER

Amy Aguilera, a civic engagement organizer with PODER, provided an overview of recommendations for infrastructural improvements. These included clarifying a bilingual staffing ratio, developing best practices to invest in language capacity of the existing workforce and recruit and retain bilingual staff, providing adequate compensation, serving people in all languages, clarifying what a reasonable turnaround time is for written translation requests, developing a budgetary percentage for language services based upon a department's size, services and number of Limited English Proficient (LEP) clients, and requiring OCEIA to use the Digital Accessibility and Inclusion Standard to offer best practices on ensuring high-quality website translation.

g. Sofia Bastida, Mujeres Unidas y Activas

Sofia Bastida with Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA) recommended that the City amend the "substantial number" of Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons to be defined as at least 5,000 city residents who speak a shared language other than English. This would include Spanish, Chinese, Filipino, Russian, and Vietnamese. She recommended removing the "emerging language population" definition as it is not associated with any substantive rights. She recommended establishing for all LEP persons, regardless of language spoken, the right to live, telephonic interpretation and written translation of critical documents, if requested, within a reasonable time frame.

Crystal Van invited Commissioners to ask questions.

Commissioner Gaime asked about the recommendation to change the threshold to 5,000, and why no African languages were included on the list of languages. Crystal Van, Silvia Ramos, and Mouneissa Wangara responded, noting that the recommendations would ensure the right to interpretation or translation within a certain time frame for all languages. In response to a question from Commissioner Gaime, Silvia Ramos defined a "reasonable time frame" as during the time the person is looking for services.

Commissioner Souza asked about possible approaches to the language bank. Crystal Van, Angelica Cabande, and Silvia Ramos discussed the language bank, and Deputy Director Whipple provided an overview of the community language bank piloted by OCEIA in 2018.

Chair Kennelly asked why LANSF recommended that Department plans be submitted to the Mayor's Office rather than OCEIA. Crystal Van discussed the need to hold City departments accountable, and noted that the Language Access Ordinance is not funded and the Mayor's Office oversees Departments' budgets.

Chair Kennelly thanked the speakers and said she would bring this item to the Executive Committee.

Chair Kennelly called for public comment. OCEIA staff provided instructions for making public comment in English, Spanish, and Filipino.

Public Comment

1. PJ Eugenio, a workforce counselor with SOMCAN, urged the Commission to support the recommendations outlined by SOMCAN and LANSF, and noted that his clients had difficulties applying for unemployment insurance because there was no Filipino translation.
2. Wilfred read a public comment in Filipino from SOMCAN client Lydia Eusebio, who asked the Commission to approve the recommendations submitted by SOMCAN and LANSF and said community members have a difficult time understanding documents written in English.
3. Silayan Kintanar, a caseworker from SOMCAN, introduced a client who spoke in Filipino. The client, Lolita Santa Ana asked for the Commission's help and noted that sometimes there are errors in interpretation or translations, so community members go to SOMCAN to ask for corrections.
4. Silayan Kintanar, a caseworker from SOMCAN, urged the Commission to support the recommendations outlined by SOMCAN and LANSF. She said many Filipinos cannot fully express themselves in English and they feel more confident advocating for themselves in Filipino. Community members ask SOMCAN for help understanding application forms for City services, including food, health care, and affordable housing programs. Housing organizations also ask SOMCAN to assist their clients in Filipino. She stated that it is important to inform community members that they can provide feedback to the City if they have trouble accessing language services.
5. Ramon Bonifacio, who works with SOMCAN, urged the Commission to support the recommendations outlined by SOMCAN and LANSF. He said the Filipino community is under-served and under-resourced, and needs more culturally competent and linguistically accessible resources. He noted that some tenants have been forced out of their homes and have difficulty accessing public resources because they cannot

understand the process.

OCEIA staff noted that members of the public who experienced technical difficulties may submit their public comments by writing.

Chair Kennelly thanked the members of the public and speakers, and invited Crystal Van to make final comments. Crystal Van thanked the Commission and encourage everyone to work with the Mayor's Office and Board of Supervisors to make sure City departments are held accountable and communities are served.

Chair Kennelly provided an update on Item 8, and left the meeting at 7:23 p.m. Commissioner Ricarte facilitated the remainder of the meeting.

7. Discussion/Action Items:

(Discussion/Action)

a. City Advocacy Related to Proposed Immigration Fee Changes (Chair Kennelly)

This item allows the Chair to provide an update on her communication with the Mayor's Office on potential actions the Commission can take to encourage City advocacy related to the federal administration's proposed changes to immigration application fees; allows the Commission to vote on whether to write a resolution, statement, letter, comment, or other document; and, if approved, allows the Chair to assign a Commissioner to take the lead in drafting the document. This item is a follow-up to a question Commissioner Rahimi raised at the January 9, 2023 Full Commission meeting, about whether the Commission could write a public comment on the federal administration's proposed immigration fee changes. Written comments on the proposed fee changes in the Federal Register are due by March 6, 2023.

Commissioner Ricarte provided an update on Chair Kennelly's communication with the Mayor's Office. The Mayor's Office suggested that the Commission write a resolution asking the City and County of San Francisco to submit a public comment on USCIS's proposed fee changes. Commissioner Rahimi volunteered to draft the resolution. Commissioners discussed whether to issue a statement or resolution. Deputy Director Whipple stated that by placing this item on today's agenda, the Commission could vote on it and assign a Commissioner to draft the resolution, and it would not have to return to the Full Commission for another vote.

Commissioner Rahimi made a motion that the Commission draft a resolution asking the Mayor's Office to make comment on the proposed fee changes, seconded by Commissioner Chaudhary. Commissioner Ricarte called for public comment and there was no public

comment on this item. The motion was approved by eight Commissioners (Commissioners Chaudhary, Enssani, Gaime, Latt, Obregon, Rahimi, Ricarte, Souza).

b. Advocacy Related to Immigrant Workers at Risk of Losing Visas (Commissioner Chaudhary)

This item allows Commissioner Chaudhary to discuss writing a statement in support of immigrant workers who are affected by tech layoffs and may be at risk of losing their visas and their ability to remain in the United States; allows the Commission to vote on whether to issue such a statement; and if approved, allows the Chair to assign a Commissioner to take the lead in drafting the statement.

Commissioner Chaudhary provided an overview of the impact of tech layoffs on immigrant workers and suggested that the Commission issue a statement. She made a motion proposing that the Commission issue a statement to acknowledge the H1B layoffs in San Francisco. Commissioners Gaime and Souza amended the motion by adding language to support immigrant workers with HB1 visas and consider both local and federal levels. Commissioner Ricarte summarized the motion for the Commission to issue a statement recognizing the layoffs and including recommendations and exploration of other issues federally and locally. Commissioner Souza seconded the motion. Commissioner Ricarte called for public comment and there was no public comment on this item. The motion was approved by the nine Commissioners present (Commissioners Chaudhary, Enssani, Gaime, Latt, Obregon, Rahimi, Ricarte, Souza, Wang). Commissioner Ricarte asked Commissioner Chaudhary to draft the statement.

8. Chair and Vice Chair Reports

(Information/Discussion)

a. Chair and Vice Chair's Updates and 2023 Preview (Chair Kennelly and Vice Chair Paz)

This item allows the Chair and Vice Chair to provide brief updates on the work of the Executive Committee and preview upcoming meetings, including the IRC Strategic Planning Retreat, a hearing on LGBTQ immigrants, and the Immigrant Leadership Awards.

This item was heard out of order. Chair Kennelly provided updates on recent work of the Executive Committee, including a meeting with Angelina Romano of SFUSD to discuss the needs of newcomer students. This was a follow-up to a letter issued by the Commission to SFUSD.

Chair Kennelly provided a preview of upcoming meetings, including the Commission's

strategic planning retreat and officer elections on April 10, a special hearing led by Commissioner Latt on LGBTQ immigrants on May 8, and the Immigrant Leadership Awards on June 12, 2023.

b. Rescheduling of March Full Commission Meeting

This item allows the Commission Chair to reschedule the March 2023 Full Commission meeting from March 13, 2023 to March 20, 2023.

Chair Kennelly rescheduled the March 13, 2023 Full Commission meeting to March 20, 2023.

c. Immigrant Leadership Awards Committee (Chair Kennelly, Commissioner Ricarte)

Information on the 2023 Immigrant Leadership Awards, which honors the contributions of local immigrant leaders and champions of immigrant committees. This item allows the Commission Chair to nominate the Awards Committee Co-Chairs and invite Commissioners to join the Awards Committee, and allows Commissioner Ricarte to schedule the first Awards Committee meeting.

Chair Kennelly invited all Commissioners to join the first Awards Committee meeting. The Immigrant Leadership Awards in June will be an in-person celebration and is an opportunity to recognize community members, their organizations, and their work.

Commissioner Ricarte announced that the first Awards Committee meeting is scheduled for February 27, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.

9. Staff Reports

(Information)

a. Director's Updates

Report on OCEIA and IRC activities and announcements. This item allows the Director to provide brief updates on activities and announcements. If the Commission would like a full report, we can place that matter on the agenda for a future meeting.

Director Rivas thanked the language access presenters for their feedback and recommendations on how the City can improve language access and address community needs. He noted that Commissioners may request business cards by March 1, 2023.

b. In-Person Commission Meetings

This item allows the Director to provide a brief update on Commissions' return to in-

person meetings beginning in March 2023.

Director Rivas announced that the Commission would return to in-person meetings in March, including all Commission and subcommittee meetings. The Full Commission will meet at City Hall, and the Executive Committee will meet at 1155 Market Street, in the 4th Floor conference room. Director Rivas previously sent Commissioners a memo on in-person meetings and how to request an exemption.

c. **Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700) Reminder**

This item allows OCEIA staff to remind Commissioners to submit their Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700) through NetFile by April 1, 2023.

Director Rivas reminded Commissioners to complete their Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700) on NetFile.

Director Rivas invited Deputy Director Whipple to provide programmatic updates. Deputy Director Whipple announced that the next San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative workshop is scheduled for March 25, 2023 in the Southeast Community Center. He asked Commissioners to share the event with their networks and encouraged Commissioners to volunteer. The DreamSF fellowship program applications are open until April 1, 2023 and OCEIA is hosting an online information session on Thursday. Commissioners are encouraged to share with their networks.

10. Old and New Business
(Information)

This item is to allow Commissioners to provide updates on items the Commission has previously discussed, and to introduce new agenda items for future consideration by the Commission.

There was no old or new business.

11. Adjournment

Commissioner Ricarte thanked Commissioners and OCEIA staff, and adjourned the meeting at 7:51 p.m.

