



NEVADA LEGISLATURE JOINT INTERIM STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

(Nevada Revised Statutes [NRS] 218E.320)

MINUTES

January 25, 2024

The first meeting of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Government Affairs for the 2023–2024 Interim was held on Thursday, January 25, 2024, at 12:30 p.m. in Room 4401, Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 3138, Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada.

The agenda, minutes, meeting materials, and audio or video recording of the meeting are available on the Committee's meeting page. The audio or video recording may also be found at <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Video/>. Copies of the audio or video record can be obtained through the Publications Office of the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) (publications@lcb.state.nv.us or 775/684-6835).

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT IN LAS VEGAS:

Assemblywoman Selena Torres, Chair
Senator Edgar Flores, Vice Chair
Assemblyman Max Carter
Assemblyman Reuben D'Silva
Assemblyman Richard McArthur

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT IN CARSON CITY:

Senator Skip Daly
Senator Ira Hansen
Assemblyman Gregory Koenig

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU STAFF PRESENT:

Jered McDonald, Chief Principal Policy Analyst, Research Division
Jennifer Ruedy, Deputy Research Director, Research Division
Maria Velazquez, Research Policy Assistant, Research Division
Heidi Chlarson, Chief Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division
Jaime Black, Principal Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division

Items taken out of sequence during the meeting have been placed in agenda order.
[Indicate a summary of comments.]

AGENDA ITEM I—CALL TO ORDER

Chair Torres:

[Chair Torres called the meeting to order. She welcomed members, presenters, and the public to the first meeting of the hardest working Interim Committee of the Nevada State Legislature, the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Government Affairs for the 2023–2024 Interim.]

It is good to see everybody here in Southern Nevada as well as those joining us in Northern Nevada. Before we get into Committee introductions, I would like to review a few housekeeping bits of information; meeting materials can be accessed on the Committee's web page located on the Nevada Legislature's website. Anyone who would like to review electronic notification of an addition to the Committee agenda, minutes, or find a report, can do so by signing up on the Legislature's website.

[Chair Torres reviewed public testimony guidelines.]

There is a lot of ways to get a hold of us. I know that Assemblyman McArthur generally prefers mail; he had some of his comments via mail this afternoon and I look forward to reading those. First, I would like to have the Committee Members introduce themselves and describe their interest in serving on the Committee. I will go ahead and start with our Vice Chair Senator Flores.

Senator Flores:

It is an honor to be here with our amazing staff who are the real magic behind this Committee, and it is an honor to serve alongside you. I have not had an opportunity to sit alongside you in the Committee, but I see the amazing work you do every morning, so I appreciate that. With everybody else, I look forward to working with you all in the interim. Hopefully we can come up with great work that we can present during the upcoming legislative session. I have had the honor to sit on this Committee since 2015, so it is a pleasure to be here again.

Chair Torres:

Thank you, Senator Flores, for always finding a way to make very brief remarks. Let us go up to Northern Nevada and start with Senator Daly then move on to Senator Hansen.

Senator Daly:

I represent Senate District 13. I have served on Government Affairs both in the Assembly and the Senate—a couple of different times—it was my main focus when I lobbied back in the day for the labor union—a lot of experience and knowledge. I am looking forward to the interim, it is the first time I have been on the Interim Committee on Government Affairs under the new structure with standing committees reflecting the policy committees during session. I am happy to be here; looking forward to our work and hopefully we can have a productive interim.

Senator Hansen:

I represent District 14. I have served in seven legislative sessions now—only one time was on Government Affairs as I recall—so the whole interim concept is a little bit new. I have served on the Legislative Commission most of the time I have been in the Legislature. I served with Public Lands and other smaller ones, but this is the first standing committee since the law passed during the 2021 Session. I am looking forward to learning more.

Chair Torres:

While we are up North, let us go ahead and go to Assemblyman Koenig.

Assemblyman Koenig:

I am sitting at the end, and I am not on the camera; so that is kind of actually nice. I am looking forward to this, I served on the Committee on Government Affairs during the 2023 Session. Chair Torres was probably my favorite Chair; I enjoyed the way she ran the meetings and look forward to doing this again. I think it goes hand-in-hand with my past experiences being the County Commissioner—I think that dovetails into government affairs—looking forward to it, and I am glad I am here.

Chair Torres:

Assemblyman Carter.

Assemblyman Carter:

I am from Assembly District 12, which is the base of Sunrise Mountain. I have been a lifelong east sider, and my interest on the Government Affairs Committee is the fact that yes, we were the hardest working Committee in the last legislative session. I also see how the work that we do on this Committee dovetails directly into what I have always believed in and that is service to your community.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

I represent Assembly District 28—Senator Flores' old district—I am proud to be following in his footsteps. I work at Rancho High School, which is a school within view of this window that we have in front of us. I must say, thank you, Madam Chair—as I have already thanked you earlier today—for having this late start so we can actually get some teaching done before serving our legislative duties here. My real interest in government affairs is the fact that it is such an over encompassing Committee; there are so many jurisdictions and I have a special interest in inter-governmental relationships, and this is the Committee to do it. Along with being the hardest working Committee, I also have the coolest fellow legislators to serve alongside with in this Committee. I am looking forward to the work at hand.

Chair Torres:

I proudly represent Assembly District 3, right here in the heart of Las Vegas, Nevada. This is my third interim and second time sitting on the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Government Affairs; I had the pleasure of serving on the Committee last time as well. I also served as Chair during the 2023 Session, where I had the opportunity to work with some phenomenal people and many of them are in the room here in Southern Nevada; as well some of the great representatives and government affairs folk from our local government. It is great to see so many familiar faces as well as the amazing staff, some of which are in Southern Nevada with us today, as well as those joining us in Northern Nevada. It is

exciting to see so many familiar faces that I know are truly committed to making sure that we are continuing to make government accessible, and that government continues to work for the people that it represents.

I would like to introduce the LCB staff who will be assisting us this interim. We do have the opportunity to always pass it to them, but I will tell you that our staff generally prefer for us to introduce them; and they definitely deserve an introduction. The first staff members I would like to introduce are Jered McDonald, who is here with us in Southern Nevada and Jennifer Ruedy who is with us in Northern Nevada. They will both serve as our Committee Policy Analysts, and they will assist us with background information and research into the issues that come before the Committee. We also have Alberto Quintero, who is sitting with us today in Southern Nevada. Alberto is a Senior Policy Analyst with the Research Division and is located in Las Vegas. Additionally, we have Heidi Chlarson and Jamie Black who serve as our Committee Legal Counsel. Finally, our Research Policy Assistant is Maria Velazquez, she will prepare the meeting minutes and will assist us with a variety of other tasks; she is in Northern Nevada.

AGENDA ITEM II—PUBLIC COMMENT

We will move on to Agenda Item II—Public Comment. Public comment will be limited to two minutes per speaker. Staff will time each speaker during public comment to ensure everyone is given a fair opportunity to speak.

An additional opportunity to make public comment will be available at the end of the meeting. Is there anyone here in Las Vegas, wishing to testify in public comment or in Northern Nevada wishing to testify in public comment? I do not see anyone at this time. Is there anyone on the phones wishing to testify in public comment?

Broadcast and Production Services (BPS):

Chair, the public line is open and working, but there are no callers at this time.

Chair Torres:

There is always another opportunity for the public to testify at the end of this meeting.

AGENDA ITEM III—PRESENTATION OF COMMITTEE BRIEF AND RECAP OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS LEGISLATION FROM THE 2023 SESSION

Chair Torres:

We will go ahead and move on to Agenda Item III—Presentation of Committee Brief and Recap of Government Affairs Related Legislation From the 2023 Session.

Actually—very briefly—I made a grave error in the introductions. I forgot to introduce my best friend Assemblyman Richard McArthur who almost needs no introduction, which is why he was skipped. Assemblyman McArthur, do you want to go ahead and give a little bit about why you are on this Committee and your commitment to serving in Government Affairs?

Assemblyman McArthur:

I have been in the Assembly for five sessions now, and I do like this particular Committee. We do a lot of things that are interesting and that can help the State, so this is one of the Committees I try to get on every single session. I am looking forward to seeing what we are going to wind up doing today.

Chair Torres:

So that the public is aware; we are resuming McArthur Minute. At the end of this meeting, we will have an opportunity for McArthur Minute to hear about what he is been up to over the last six months since we were last in Carson City.

We will go ahead and go back to Agenda Item III. Mr. McDonald, please proceed with the presentation when you are ready.

Mr. McDonald:

We are going to go over the Committee Brief, which is located on the back table and on our website for anybody who would like to download that. The Brief provides information on the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Government Affairs including an overview of the Committee's powers and duties, work plan, jurisdiction, and relevant reports and publications; among other things. The powers and duties of this Committee were created with the passage of Assembly Bill 443 (2021) as codified in NRS 218E.330. The Committee may: evaluate and review issues within the jurisdiction of the corresponding standing committee or committees from the preceding regular session of the Legislature; may exercise any of the investigative powers set forth in NRS 218E.105 to 218E.140; within the limits of the Committee's budget, conduct studies directed by the Legislature or Legislative Commission; and finally, the Committee may request up to ten bill drafts requests (BDR) this interim. I would note that at this point, I would usually review BDRs from last interim, but no BDRs were submitted from this Committee last interim. Next is the work plan; the budget approved by the Legislative Commission allows the Committee to conduct up to six hearings throughout the interim and those hearings must conclude by August 31, 2024, at which point the Committee needs to submit those ten BDRs. We do have a list of tentative dates for future meetings, those dates include February 22nd, April 12th, May 8th, June 10th, and August 23rd.

The Committee generally has jurisdiction over a wide range of issues affecting State and local government. Some of those topics include cities, counties and general improvement districts, cooperative agreements, homeland security, housing authorities, public officers and employees, public works, open meeting law, State and local government, financial administration, and many others. A variety of reports are available regarding government affairs issues in Nevada on the legislative website; paper copies are available upon request.

As I am sure you know, the Legislature requires various State and local entities to provide reports to the Legislature, Legislative Commission, the Interim Finance Committee, and other legislative committees. A complete report of those reports is also located on the legislative website, if you have an electronic version of this, you can link directly to that. Based on the research we did, we found just two reports that were directly required to report to this Committee. The first is pursuant to NRS 459.0094, this is a report from the Agency for Nuclear Projects. They must report a summary of their status of their activities to not only this Committee but also the Interim Standing Committees on Growth and Infrastructure, Health and Human Services, and Natural Resources. The second was approved with the passage of Assembly Bill 143, this last session. This report requires Storey County to report the number of conveyances of real property initiated or completed as outlined in the bill on or before July 1st of this year; we should expect to see something as we get closer to July 1st. On the back page of the Brief, we have listed contact information for all the Committee staff, so feel free to contact us if you need anything. Finally, the Research Division is available to assist the Committee and its members on any issue related to matters before the Committee. In addition, Research staff provides

individual members of the Legislature information and assistance on a confidential basis on any topic. If you need to reach us, please contact us at the phone number listed or email us at research@lcb.state.nv.us. That concludes my overview of the Committee Brief.

I will move onto a recap of legislation from last session. I am sure you all remember putting a lot of effort into a lot of these bills, so I put together a bit of a scorecard. The Senate Committee on Government Affairs was referred 114 bills last session; the Assembly Committee on Government Affairs was issued 110. Of the 114 that were referred to the Senate Committee on Government Affairs, 91 were passed out; Assembly Government Affairs passed out 87. Of the 91 passed out of Senate Government Affairs; 76 went to the Governor. Of the 87 passed by Assembly Government Affairs; 75 went to the Governor. Of the 76 that went to the Governor of the Senate bills, 18 were vetoed. Of the 87, Assembly Government Affairs passed out 75. Again, 75 were passed and 16 we are vetoed. In total, from the 114 referred to Senate Government Affairs 58—or 51 percent of those bills—did become law. For Assembly Government Affairs, of the 110 that were referred to the Committee 59—or 54 percent—became law.

Chair Torres:

Mr. McDonald, are you saying that the Assembly Committee on Government Affairs was slightly more effective at passing legislation?

Mr. McDonald:

I will let you be the judge of that, but it appears that Senate Government Affairs was referred about 4 more bills and 58 of those became law. Assembly Government Affairs was referred 110 and 59 were passed; so possibly by one. A summary of all the bills that were passed out of both houses—that became law and/or were vetoed—can be found in your packets as well as in the *Summary of Legislation* located on the legislative website. In your packet today, we have included a subset of the *Summary of Legislation*, these bills that we included are what we categorized as State and local government. We have also included a summary of the bills passed out of the Government Affairs Committees that were vetoed at the end of that document. That concludes my overview or recap of legislation from last session, if there are any questions, I would be happy to answer them.

Chair Torres:

Members, are there any questions in Northern Nevada? [There were no questions.] Are there any questions in Southern Nevada? [There were no questions.] At this time, we will go ahead and proceed with Agenda Item IV—Overview of Language Access Laws.

AGENDA ITEM IV—OVERVIEW OF LANGUAGE ACCESS LAWS

Mr. McDonald:

I am going to provide a presentation on language access laws. I would like to remind the Committee—and anyone watching—that as a member of the Research Division, I serve in a nonpartisan capacity and can neither advocate nor oppose any legislation that comes before the Committee. I would also note that as a member of the Research Division, I cannot provide legal counsel or advice, and that any of the information presented today should not be construed as legal interpretation or opinion.

We are going to take a look at the general overview and background of language access laws, examples of language access laws in other states, and a few laws in Nevada. This

presentation has been tailored to cover laws that are generally within the purview of this Committee's jurisdiction. The issue of language access is quite broad and touches many aspects of private and public sector activities including employment law, health care, the legal system, and many others. What I am going to discuss today largely affects State and local government and their responsibilities concerning language access.

Research on this topic indicated that many language access laws and policies are grounded in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, certain other acts, and Supreme Court rulings and Executive Order 13166. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits recipients of federal financial assistance from discriminating based on race, color, or national origin. The law states no person in the United States shall—on the ground of race, color, or national origin—be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. The application of Title VI extends to providing meaningful access to individuals who have limited English proficiency as languages are related to national origin. Seeing a need to possibly clarify this law in the year 2000, President Bill Clinton signed Executive Order 13166 improving access to services for persons with limited English proficiency to federal agencies. The Executive Order required all federal agencies to establish guidelines on providing meaningful access to limited English proficiency (LEP) individuals in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and to discuss guidelines to recipients of their funding to clarify what they must do to provide meaningful access to LEP persons. Although these measures create a basic right and framework for language access, they are limited to only apply to federally funded programs. In response to the practical need for State and local governments to communicate with their constituencies, many State and local government entities have implemented laws and policies to effectively communicate in context related to public health, public safety, and promoting available services. Many State and local governments face a broad range of settings in which they directly serve residents with LEP. Many jurisdictions have created their own laws and policies to better foster and govern language access across the public services they provide. These laws and policies share many common features that can provide a framework for language access. While these laws and policies often take cues from federal guidance on language access, they also contain many unique and innovative elements necessary to ensure language access in day-to-day functions. According to information developed by the Migration Policy Institute, the following are a set of features shared by many language access laws. Those include identification of affected agencies, which can include those government agencies specifically named in the law; a subset of those serving the public; and to all agencies within a government. Many language access laws require agencies to translate documents into one or more languages, some laws and policies explicitly state the number of languages, or which specific languages documents must be translated into, depending on the size and characteristics of local LEP populations.

Many language access laws require agencies to provide in-person or remote interpretation services for LEP individuals, and may also provide guidance or regulations on the use of bilingual staff, professional interpreters, and volunteers. Policies regarding accuracy and services ensure accurate interpretation and translation services by requiring services to be provided by qualified individuals. Many of these programs require staff training and professional development on topics such as agency language access responsibilities and cultural and linguistic competency. For the purpose of public awareness, many language access laws require some sort of advertisement of language access services offered by an agency through posting signage in public places or on websites and developing outreach initiatives. Designation and recruitment of agency personnel to supervise language access can expand agency capacity by creating designated positions such as Language Access Coordinators to support and oversee law policy implementation on an agency level.

Implementation plans require agencies to document how they will provide meaningful language access and meet the provisions of the law or policy. This documentation is generally achieved through language access plans and there is often a requirement to update these plans on a regular basis. Agency oversight authorizes a particular department, office, entity, or individual with overseeing agencies implementation of language access services. Advisory councils and technical assistance bodies typically support agencies in implementing language access services by providing technical assistance, advice on implementation, and/or sharing feedback regarding quality of services. Accountability mechanisms help to ensure compliance with language access regulations. Common mechanisms include annual compliance plans, reports to the Legislature, or complaint procedures that allow LEP individuals to file complaints that agencies must respond to. Data and population tracking requires agencies to monitor the use of services and growth of LEP populations in their communities in an effort to detect emerging and/or growing language access needs. In many cases, tracking LEP populations tend to include the use of census data or data on the people actually using the agency services.

Finally, devoting necessary resources addresses issues of financial capacity to provide language access services. Some laws and policies may require agencies to plan to allocate funding, use standard rates of compensation for interpretation and translation, or track expenditures. As you will see, many states and local governments have incorporated a number of these key aspects in their language access laws including Nevada's—some states do things differently or in a unique way.

Next, I am going to review short summaries of some of the laws that other states and local governments have implemented for comparison, then we will talk about Nevada laws. Starting with the State of New York; Chapter 18, Article 10, subsection 202-A was passed in July of 2022. This law requires each State agency that provides direct public services in New York State to translate all vital documents relevant to services offered by the agency into the 12 most common non-English spoken languages spoken by LEP individuals in the State based on data and the most recent American community survey published by the U.S. Census Bureau. Each State agency must designate a Language Access Coordinator to ensure compliance and subject agencies must develop language access plans and update every two years. That is similar to Nevada's—I believe agencies must provide interpretation services between the agency and an individual primary language with respect to the provision of services or benefits by the agency.

Another example is the City of Albuquerque; Resolution R-2022-006 was passed in December 2021. The Resolution requires each City department to develop a language access plan and starting in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, each department must propose an annual budget to cover the costs associated with implementing the plan. Each department must designate a Language Access Coordinator and translate and maintain copies of all vital documents.

New York City Local Law 30 passed in 2017, and it requires every covered agency to develop a language access implementation plan and provide language access services for all designated City languages. Those services include identifying and translating documents most commonly distributed to the public that contain or illicit important and necessary information regarding the provision of basic services, providing interpretation of services through telephonic interpretation, then posting of multilingual signage in conspicuous places of locations about the availability of free interpretation services.

Boston Massachusetts' Ordinance 2016, Chapter 16-2016 requires the City of Boston—through its department—to implement a communications access policy for residents who

have a disability, who are English language learners, or limited English speakers. This ordinance also requires each department to present a customized communications access plan to an Oversight Committee composed of representatives from the Mayor's Office of New Bostonians, the Mayor's Commission for Persons with Disabilities and other agencies. This Oversight Committee serves the centralized enforcement entity for the communications access ordinance. Each department must undergo an annual review to evaluate their expenses, performance, and frequency of service delivered to LEP residents and residents with disabilities.

San Francisco has Ordinance 27-15, Language Access Requirements for Departments. They require their City and County departments to provide their services in English and in languages spoken by substantial populations of LEP speaking persons in the City. They require their departments to designate a language access liaison, develop, adopt, and implement a department specific language access policy, coordinate their language services, determine a budget for their department needs and provide residents with a way to report failures in providing language access.

Hawaii has Language Access Law, Chapter 321C that applies to State agencies and covered entities that receive State funding and provide services to the public. Their law requires each agency and covered entities to establish a language access plan, take steps to ensure meaningful access to LEP persons, provide oral interpretation services that are competent and timely, and provide written translation and vital documents. This bill also established the Office of Language Access to ensure compliance with the law and to provide technical assistance and established the Language Access Advisory Council to advise on implementation.

In Maryland they have State Code, Section 10-1103, it requires most State agencies to provide free interpreter services, and requires agencies to provide translation if a language is spoken by 3 percent or more of the population served by the agency.

There is also Washington DC's Language Access Act of 2004; this requires District programs, departments, and services to assess for the need and offer oral language services, requires written translation of documents into any non-English language spoken by a limited or non-English proficient population that constitutes 3 percent or 500 individuals—whichever is less—of the population served. They have a bit different threshold on what language they are going to provide their documents in. Their law also ensures the District government programs, departments, and services with major public contact, establish and implement a language access plan and designate a Language Access Coordinator, and requires the Office of Human Rights to coordinate and supervise District government programs, departments, and services in complying with the Act.

I think one of the oldest ones that I came across was the California Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act of 1973. This one is over 50 years old; it requires departments to explain or translate information and services to the public in any language spoken by 5 percent or more of those served. If any individual believes they have not been provided with the requested information or services, they can file a language access complaint.

The last two states I am going to cover are New Jersey and Michigan; these bills were passed in 2023. New Jersey Senate Bill 2459 requires State government entities in the Executive Branch—that provide direct services to the public—to translate vital documents and information in at least seven of the most common non-English spoken languages by individuals with LEP based on U.S. Census Bureau data. The bill also requires each State agency to develop and publish a language access plan and directs the Commissioner

of Human Services, Attorney General, and Chief Technology Officer to provide guidance to the heads of State government entities and the respective Language Access Coordinators. Finally, their law is very clear about filing complaints if there is a failure to comply; provisions of the bill do not arise to the right of an action against the State or government entity.

The last state I am going to talk about before I speak about Nevada is Michigan. This last year, they passed two laws related to language access. The first, is Meaningful Language Access to State Services. Under this law, each covered entity must take reasonable steps to provide free meaningful language access to public services for individuals of limited proficiency, and each covered entity within the State government must develop and submit a report with information and plans concerning implementation and meaningful language access and update that not less than every two years. The second measure they passed is the Statewide Meaningful Language Access Coordination Act; I think this is where they provide a little bit more oversight. The central agency, the Office of Global Michigan, must coordinate steps taken by State agencies to implement meaningful language access, designate at least one liaison, and create a complaint form and process. It provides that any individual who believes they were denied full or equal access to a covered entity because of their national origin has a right to separately seek a remedy within the Department of Civil Rights within their State government.

Next, I am going to talk about Nevada laws and for this, I am going to start by highlighting a couple of measures that seem to conform with the intent of the language access concepts that we have discussed. One is related to the judicial system and has been in effect for nearly 30 years; the other is related to elections and was passed by the Legislature this last year; though it was later vetoed by the Governor. The first is the Nevada Certified Court Interpreter Program, codified in NRS 1.500 to 1.570, and was passed in 1995 through the passage of Senate Bill 329. Again, this established the Nevada Certified Court Interpreter Program and charged the State Court Administrator with establishing a program for the certification of court interpreters for witnesses, defendants, and litigants who speak a language other than English and do not know the English language. It created the Advisory Committee for a Certified Court Interpreter Program to advise the State Court Administrator regarding regulations related to certification. This language access plan had three primary purposes, those were: to provide guidance for the consistent application of policies and practices throughout the Nevada Court system; to provide the basis for training of judicial employees and staff to engage in LEP individuals; and to inform LEP individuals about available language access resources. This is a measure that incorporates a lot of the common aspects of language access programs that we discussed earlier. The next bill, Assembly Bill 246, would have required the Secretary of State and county and city clerks to provide certain voting materials—as defined in the bill—in the language of a LEP minority group if upon review of certain data by the Secretary of State, the minority group meets a specified population threshold. It required the Secretary of State and authorizes county clerks to establish a toll-free telephone number for language interpretation and translation assistance in relation to elections and required the county and city clerks to make a good effort to appoint bilingual election board officers. The bill also would have changed the voter registration forms to allow for the collection of certain information including whether an elector would like to receive a sample ballot in a language other than English. It also would have created the Language Access Advisory Committee within the Secretary of State's office, to among other things, identify programs and services that address issues related to language, accessibility of elections, and voting materials; and assesses whether any such programs or services could be implemented in Nevada. Again, that bill was vetoed.

Senate Bill 318 (2001). This is codified NRS 232.0081, and requires each agency in the executive department of State government to develop and biennially revise a language access plan that includes information related to existing services available to individuals with limited access proficiency and recommendations for meeting the need for such services, among those served by the agency.

Assembly Bill 266 (2023) was passed last session. This bill requires each board of county commissioners and governing body of a city to develop a language access plan and revise it every two years. It requires the board of county commissioners in a county whose population is 100,000 or more—Clark and Washoe—and the governing bodies of the cities within those counties that have a population over 25,000 to ensure that certain public notices are issued in other languages; that provision became effective on January 1st—earlier this month. It also requires the Nevada Governor’s Office for New Americans (ONA) to employ a Language Access Coordinator to perform certain duties related to language interpreters, translators, and language access plans. The provisions of these bills also create a lot of new duties for ONA and those include coordinating with each governing body required to create a language access plan, provide oversight, central coordination, consultation, and technical assistance to any State agency, board of county commissioners, and governing body of a city in the implementation of their language access plans. Provide any State agency, board of county commissioners, and governing body of a city with a policy manual containing baseline policies and procedures for compliance with language access requirements. Nevada Governor’s Office for New Americans must also maintain a publicly available roster of language interpreters and translators in positions that regularly have contact with the public and the languages each interpreter or translator speaks. Some additional duties were to train State agencies, boards of county commissioners, and governing bodies of a city to effectively recruit and retain interpreters and translators; receive and investigate complaints related to language access against any State agency, county commission, or governing body of a city; and they must also implement an annual budget and procurement strategy for expenses related to State language access plans. Finally, ONA must provide any local government with demographical information of persons with LEP or constituents to the local government. You can see where a lot of those concepts and the language access frameworks that we reviewed at the beginning—that lot of states are implementing—were also implemented in the passage of AB 266.

The final bill we are going to discuss is AB 480. This appropriated \$25 million from the State General fund to the Interim Finance Committee (IFC) for allocation in FY 2024–2025 to Executive Branch agencies for the implementation of language access plans, as required by the law and any remaining balance must go back to the State General Fund. We did have a chance to reach out to our Fiscal Division regarding requests for funding from this bill, and as of December 13, 2023, IFC had not received any request for funding. However, there has been one request made that will be on the agenda for IFC on February 8, 2024, the Department of Wildlife has requested an allocation of \$200,431 to fund their Department's language access plan; that is the only request that we are aware of at this point. That concludes my prepared remarks concerning language access laws and plans in Nevada and other states. We do have ONA on hand to discuss implementation of these bills, and I would be happy to answer any questions I can.

Chair Torres:

That was a very thorough presentation, thank you, Mr. McDonald. Are there any questions in Northern Nevada? [There were no questions.] Are there any questions in Southern Nevada? [There were no questions.]

AGENDA ITEM V—PRESENTATION ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE GOVERNOR’S OFFICE FOR NEW AMERICANS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LANGUAGE ACCESS LEGISLATION

Chair Torres:

We are going to receive a presentation from the ONA. I would like to invite Ms. Ramos Jones and Mr. Nava to the witness table, please begin when you are ready.

Iris Ramos Jones, Director, ONA:

Good afternoon and thank you so much for the opportunity to be here with you. I am a first generation immigrant from Ecuador. I came to the United States ten years ago and became a naturalized citizen five years ago. I have been the Director of ONA since September 11, 2023; four months. I want to start first by sharing with you—the journey of an immigrant is a remarkable and profound one, marked by courage in the pursuit of a better life. I have experienced firsthand the trials and tribulations that come with leaving one's homeland. It is a great honor for me to be here today and to be part of Governor Joe Lombardo's cabinet. His commitment to ensuring that our newest Nevadans feel prepared and welcomed in the great State of Nevada is truly inspiring. Also as somebody who came to the United States without being able to speak the language; I want to thank each person who was part of the approval of AB 266. I can see the positive impact that this will make in a newcomer's life.

Our Language Access Coordinator will start on February 5th, and I will be sending an invitation for a work meeting between her, the rest of the ONA team, and the sponsor of the bill. I truly believe in the power of collaboration, and would love to hear from you the expectations for these programs, to make sure that my office delivers the best results for our community.

The ONA was created by SB 588 with the mission of promoting inclusion and integration of immigrants, refugees, and aspiring Americans into the civic economic and cultural life in Nevada. Moreover, ONA is and will be dedicated to identifying gaps in our local and State agency programs and services in order to provide our newcomers with workforce development opportunities, education opportunities, resources for English language classes, support for refugee resettlement, and more. I want to introduce our Senior Advisor Vincent Nava, as of now, it is just the two of us on the ONA team. As I said, we will be welcoming the Language Access Coordinator on February 5th, and we have a vacancy in our office for an administrative assistant. This is a little bit of the population that we serve, as well as the issues covered by ONA.

We work closely with the refugee resettlement agencies, focus on continuing education, community engagement, workforce development, and language access. In the last four months, we have served 78 constituents and we are working on the bill's implementation—SB 222. The ONA alongside the Nevada Office of Minority Health and Equity, the Nevada Commission of Minority Affairs, and the collaboration of Senator Melanie Schieble—who is the sponsor of this bill—we created and presented the *2023 Diversity and Inclusion Liaison Report*, it can be found on our website. We are working on AB 266, we provided cities and counties with the documents that contain overall guidelines and timelines for the implementation of the language access plan. Our Advisor, Vincent Nava, is the liaison for these two implementation bills and will be delivering the details after my presentation. In the last four months, ONA has been continuously working with our community partners. The ONA participated in the Immigrant Career Summit alongside

Nevada State College, College of Southern Nevada, University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), Consulate General of Mexico, Asian Community Development Counsel, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, Make the Road Nevada, and the African Diaspora of Las Vegas. We also provided a Zoom class for the Consulate of Mexico about the professional licenses available in the State of Nevada. We aim to break down all the bureaucratic barriers that are involved with the occupational licenses. We also met with the Consulate General of El Salvador—the second largest Hispanic population in the State of Nevada. We heard the challenges and continuously provide assistance with cases affecting the population it represents. We work with the building trade unions, and ONA had the opportunity to participate in the Career Fair with the Builders Association. We have identified the needs for workers and the gap when it comes to information about the different work permits and the connection between the employers and the immigration community; that is a big gap. The ONA will organize a meeting between the Builders Association representative and the resettlement agencies; I have advocated for refugees to be hired within the different builders organizations. With UNR I have had the opportunity to meet with the Latino Research Government Relationships Department and members of the Multicultural Center. We will be collaborating with them to address existing barriers related to foreign equivalency certifications in the State of Nevada. At the University of Nevada, Las Vegas—we met with the Immigration Clinic, and we are committed to collaborating with them; they also help ONA with different constituent services. Regarding Global High School; I had the amazing opportunity to speak with the Principal and immigrant students, and I have compromised my time to participate in mentorship opportunities. We have identified challenges that we hope to put together and bring to the next session.

To give you an idea of one of the biggest challenges they face, their space occupancy is 243 students and they received 1,200 applications for enrollment. I met with the Clark County School District's (CCSD) Family Support Center, and had a meeting with Director Flores and Ms. Rodriguez from Newcomer Support and Integration Services. We learned about the various programs they offer and identified significant challenges these children face. One challenge is that they are not able to enroll in extracurricular activities when it comes to sports because of the lack of health insurance. With United Way we have an ongoing participation on their language access cross-sector working group. With the Las Vegas Chamber, ONA will be part of their initiative to create a website where all Nevadans can find workforce development opportunities. We have broken ground and established new relationships with populations from the countries of Thailand, Philippines, Ecuador, and Nicaragua.

We are also collaborating actively with State agencies like the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). The first week of February, we will be holding a working meeting between ONA, the refugee resettlement agencies, and the DMV team to go over different documents that refugees from certain countries use for identification. We aim to alleviate the process of obtaining a driver's license in the State of Nevada. We have a work meeting with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Welfare and Supportive Services (DWSS) to learn about different programs, and we have identified the challenges that the immigrant community have when they require their services. We are going to be collaborating with DWSS on board licensure pathways for foreign trained individuals as well as launching train-to-hire cohorts with an immersive English Second Language (ESL) module and community outreach efforts. One of their biggest concerns is that the immigrant population is afraid to come to them because they think they are going to lose their work permits if they require their services. With the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED)—specifically the Office of Entrepreneurship—ONA will be participating in the cross regional dialogue.

On January 31st, we will review local priorities, set strategic goals, and determine necessary resources to successfully face new business opportunities and challenges. I also want to share ongoing collaboration with federal agencies. We are now participating in naturalization ceremonies where ONA will be providing information about our Office to the newest citizens. The ONA is now receiving updates from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) directly and not through third parties. The ONA also participated in the first online statistical dashboard hosted by DHS and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). We also participated in Nevada's Business Roundtable on immigration, it was organized by the Latin Chamber of Commerce and the State Business Executive. The ONA along with Congresswoman Dina Titus (D-Nevada), the Office of Senator Catherine Cortez Masto (D-Nevada), the Builders Association, and others discussed and advocated for solutions regarding our Nation's immigration system; especially when it comes to work permits for asylum seekers.

For those who are not aware, when asylum seekers come to the country they cannot apply for a work permit until 150 days after their application for the asylum—which creates a big gap—what are these people going to do during six months without being able to work? We are discussing opportunities in the State for these people. Interns with the Office of U.S. Representative Dina Titus (D-Nevada)—many of whom are immigrants themselves—visited the ONA office; as we work closely with her Office on constituent services cases. The ONA works with the offices of U.S. Senator Catherine Cortez Masto (D-Nevada), U.S. Senator Jackie Rosen (D-Nevada), and U.S. Representative Susie Lee (D-Nevada). We appreciate the prompt responses we receive from their team when we reach out with our constituent issues. We also have a relationship with the office of U.S. Representative Mark Amodei (R-Nevada). I am happy to announce that we now have great partnerships, and we will continue to look for more. The ONA has a partnership with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department; we advocate for awareness regarding the increasing cases of mental health and domestic violence among immigrants that mostly come from their so-called sponsors and/or family members—I had the opportunity to share my personal experience in this regard.

The primary objective of our group is to engage with the community, fostering discussions not only about the law but also about their rights. We aim to break the barriers that currently exist between newcomers and law enforcement, as well as the government. We will have an event on January 25th—you can find the information on our social media—where we are anticipating the participation of 2,000 community members. We also have a partnership with the Libre Initiative; we will be providing ESL classes and citizenship test preparation classes at no cost to the community—we will start that program in spring of this year. We also have a partnership with the Latin Chamber of Commerce Nevada, where we are taking an active role in community outreach programs and round table discussions. These engagements focus on addressing opportunities for the Hispanic population, especially in the areas of entrepreneurship, workforce development, and education.

Lastly, I want to share with you ONA's collaboration with Refugee Resettlement agencies in both Northern and Southern Nevada. Additionally, we work in partnerships with organizations that offer legal services and empower refugees by promoting self-sufficiency and encourage personal growth. Some of our partners are Legal Aid of Southern Nevada, Lighthouse Charities, and Catholic Charities of Northern Nevada. Our active involvement extends to participating in Refugee Resettlement quarterly consultations. During a recent session, several key organizations were present, including Catholic Charities of Southern Nevada, Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), African Community Center, Northern Nevada International Center (NNIC), the offices of U.S. Senator Cortez Masto (D-Nevada), and U.S. Representative Mark Amodei (R-Nevada), as well as the Nevada

Health Equity Program, Nevada Tuberculosis Prevention, Control and Elimination Controller, and DHHS and DWSS, among others. This collaborative effort underscores our commitment to supporting and addressing the needs of refugees in the community. Please reach out to us, we are ready to collaborate with you.

Vincent Nava, Senior Advisor, ONA:

Good afternoon, thank you so much for this invitation and for the opportunity to be here. I am going to be speaking on the second half of today's presentation. We are going to talk about language access and implementation. This presentation is going to have a little bit of overlap with Mr. McDonald's presentation, but it is also going to talk about the implementation work that we have done at the ONA in relation to the legislative bills that we have been a part of in terms of language access.

Senate Bill 318 (2021) passed in the 81st Legislative Session and provides the head of each agency of the Executive Department to designate one or more employees of the agency to be responsible for developing and biennially revising the language plan for the agency. I want to thank Senator Doñate for this bill; it was timely and very important during the pandemic. We needed to help bridge the gaps that existed in getting information out; as information was changing very rapidly and it was important. Additionally, these language access plans are a guide for each State agency to be able to see the needs that it has and try to help fill in the gaps. These language access plans are extremely important because they allow the agencies to reflect on the work that needs to be done and determine how we are going to get there. In regard to bridging the gap, SB 318 was crucial, it was paramount because the LEP population that is part of Nevada, it is about 300,000 individuals or close to 1 in 10 Nevadans, per the 2020 census data from Migration Policy Institute. A great portion of these LEP individuals are of immigrant background, and this is where some of the need is—for us to be able to step up and help with this bill. Also, not leaving out Nevadans with disabilities, the deaf and hard of hearing, and visually impaired communities because we need to ensure accessibility for all in the State. This is why ONA—without being named—stepped up in late 2021 and early 2022 to kick off the Nevada Initiative for Language Access (NILA). The NILA is aimed to create a central point of contact and a clearinghouse of information, resources, and language access issues in the State of Nevada. What that means is we took it upon ourselves to try to do something about language access—make it across the board, make it systemic. Since this bill passed, we received the wind under our wings to be able to carry out some of the work. We did not do this work alone; everything was done through collaboration; we are especially thankful for the State Innovation Fund that we received. The Fund provided financial support to work alongside the Northern Nevada International Center (NNIC) Language Access Banks Division, which as Iris mentioned, is the only refugee resettlement agency in Northern Nevada; we are thankful that they specialize in language access. Additionally, we brought in the experts and partnered up with the National Center for Interpretation (NIC) from the University of Arizona; they are crucial in helping us implement and develop these language access plans.

How did they help? They helped some of NILA's goals and accomplishments; these are some of the goals that ONA was able to accomplish and carry forward with SB 318. First, we developed and created a language access template and language access toolkit. This is paramount because every State agency has different needs that need to be tailored to the population they serve. For instance, the Department of Wildlife might have a smaller constituency group as opposed to the DMV—which is much broader—it serves the whole State. With that, we created the toolkit and the template—we call it the blueprint and the guide—because we figured if the State agencies need to create a language access plan sometimes it is hard to see where to start, so we created this toolkit in order to help guide

them through the process of how to create it. Additionally, we went and set out training because we know that training is paramount in order for agencies to understand what it means to create a language access plan and how to implement it.

Lastly, we created a centralized hub of information. This hub of information is paramount. If you look at our website, we collected all of the language access plans that were developed in 2021—two years ago—they are all there for public use and awareness, they exist. At the same time helping State agencies revisit their plans as we have to be able to revise these plans biannually. In addition, in the past we have also collaborated with other states in the creation of their language access plans, as well as ours, in order to replicate good practices and ensure that they are carried out here in the State of Nevada.

This is a community effort, and I cannot emphasize collaboration enough. We are thankful for our partners, specifically United West Southern Nevada for bringing ONA into the conversation. We sat down and had a conversation about the high need to be able to address and bridge those gaps when it comes to language accessibility to government and the organizations they serve and cater to. We started the cross sector language access group, and we meet on a monthly basis. We actually had a meeting—well, were supposed to have a meeting today, but we are here right now presenting—I am pretty sure they will let that one slide. This partnership kicked off with the notion of bringing in government nonprofits and members of the community to be able to be systemic and statewide when it comes to language access because we thought about going above and beyond, not just to agencies but reaching out to the community, and ensuring that these language access plans were sharing their information. We shared the toolkit and everything that we had at our disposal in order to aid in their development. That concludes SB 318, some highlights that we have done.

We will move on to AB 480, we are extremely grateful to the Legislature and to the Governor for the passage of this bill because, as Mr. McDonald mentioned, this bill is going to fund these language access plans. One thing is having a plan—where to go, a road map—but another thing is funding it and by having \$25 million now, State agencies during FY 2024–2025 are able to fund and implement these language access plans. We have seen the need for this funding and have informed State agencies. To the right hand side of that bubble is the Language Access Implementation Plan Legislation Overview that we send to State agencies informing them of the policies that are taking place, and how they can start thinking about them as we are going to help guide them through it. Additionally, we plan on providing support, even though we are not specifically named in the bill. We understand that language access plans are funded through this bill. We are going to help remind them of the ability to secure the funding that is available to them to implement these plans.

This brings us to AB 266, I am going to talk about the work and what it is. First, we cannot thank Assemblywoman Torres enough for being able to carry on this bill. As Mr. McDonald had already mentioned, this bill expands—one thing is SB 318, it was important and very crucial during the pandemic—we needed to get information out and we acted with State agencies. Assembly Bill 266 expanded upon that work that SB 318 had done by expanding it to the counties of Washoe and Clark and the cities of 25,000 or more within them, which are the cities of Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, Henderson, Reno, and Sparks.

Sections 2 and 7 are about public notice, ensuring that these cities and counties provide information of a public notice within the voting language of that county. In Washoe County—it is Spanish and English; in Clark County—it is Spanish, English, and Tagalog. Assembly Bill 266 Sections 3 and 6 are where it directly mentions ONA and our office. Like I mentioned before, this is going to expand upon the language access plans to the cities and

the counties, and we were excited to start conversations prior to the passing of this bill and ensuring that we can get this statewide and implement this across. This bill carries out a lot of objectives, goals, and responsibilities within our office, these bullet points highlight some of the points that have already been touched upon and covered; these are the goals and objectives that we aim to carry out within our office in terms of the implementation of AB 266 when it comes to Sections 3 and 6.

There is a timeline we wanted to share about previous and upcoming events. October 1st—the kick off of the funding set off; October 25th—we sent out the language implementation plan and overview for the State agencies to be aware of; we also informed them that the public notices would become effective January 1st; too January 1st public notices became effective; and February 5th is the designated start date for the Language Access Coordinator. In 2024, we aim to meet with the bill sponsors and cosponsors of AB 266 or whoever wants to meet with us in order to be able to work together to carry out the vision and mission of the bill. In March 2024, we aim to have trainings for the State and counties and roll out the toolkit and template. April through June is the development period for language access plans for cities and counties along with State agencies. In July 2024, is the public comment phase; as when you develop the language plan, it does call for a public comment phase, and within this phase we are given a month to be able to collect feedback from the public. On August 1st, all counties, cities, and State agencies submit language plans to our office, and on September 30th, we will submit our report to the LCB, which in turn will submit it to Members of the Committee and all the Members of the Legislature.

These are things that we are going to do. Our vision is for ONA to become a hub of language access for the State of Nevada—it needs to be statewide and systemic to work. We used to talk to different states throughout the nation about their language plans—in their cities, counties, and statewide. It came as no surprise that it needs to be coordinated by one entity instead of being decentralized—everybody is doing different things across the State. If we are all on the same page of what it means to have language accessibility in the State, we have found the most success. We aim to carry on that charge. Additionally, we will continuously work and revise to ensure the services and goals are met. This is not a one job deal; we have to continue to—as it mandates—to revise these language plans biennially. As changes take place and populations differ, we want to make sure that we are always on top of addressing the needs and helping service the State agencies, cities, and counties involved. Last but not least, we want to work together and advance the vision of this bill forward. We believe in collaboration. We want to advance together with everyone—legislators, community, many identities that are named in this bill. We believe that is the best way forward, and that is what we plan to do. That is the conclusion of my presentation; the last slide is our contact information. Thank you once again for the opportunity to be here.

Chair Torres:

Are there any questions?

Assemblyman D'Silva:

Thank you for the thorough presentation and for the work that the office is doing; there is good work being done. I had a question about undocumented immigrants—this is a major part of our immigrant community. I have been very open about it in the last few years; I lived in this country without papers until I was 13 years old. I was wondering if there is any outreach being done to that community, which I think is one of the most vulnerable

new American communities here. Is there any plan of action moving forward to address those issues?

Mrs. Ramos Jones:

First, when somebody calls my office we do not go through a questionnaire—we serve all Nevadans period. Regarding the outreach specifically for a certain community, can you please develop a little bit more about it, because we are working on outreach for the entire community—we do not segment people. How do you find that out? I share here with you; I am an immigrant, and I do not expect anybody to say, hey, hello, how are you? Hi, my name is Iris, I am this or that. We are doing community outreach for the entire population where we believe the immigrant community in general are.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

My question really is—when you look at the immigrant communities—their official capacities, like the consulate or the different refugee agencies that work with New Americans have a conduit there, but oftentimes some of our undocumented communities do not have that. They have come here in a way that they are not present in many of the representative data. I think it is incumbent to go to those communities and have a specific action plan to engage those folks, who oftentimes feel that it could be dangerous for them to speak out or to engage with the government entities.

Mrs. Ramos Jones:

Absolutely, I understand that. One of the challenges that I found in this office when I came on four months ago is exactly that—the community outreach. We are still addressing those issues mainly because there is limited awareness among the population about our office or people have a misunderstanding of our office too. That is why when I talked about community outreach with Metro for example, the police serve everybody—every person in the community. We are out there—the message is—we are here, please come, we are here to help you. As I said, we do not go through a questionnaire, anybody can knock at our door, call, or email us and we will serve every person. We are doing community outreach. I do not know specifically—when you talk about a community—I as an immigrant do not know where to find them because I do not approach people by asking them their status. So again, we are serving the entire community, that is our goal.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

Moving forward, would there be a way of understanding that there is an issue there, and that the ONA can have a plan of action to address those communities? I know that we can have the blanket approach; where we go into the community and bring people out, but I think there are pockets of groups of people—and I come across them all the time as a member of the community and as a teacher—who are a little bit resistant to come out, so we may have to go to them as opposed to bringing them to us. You see what I am saying there, Director?

Mrs. Ramos Jones:

Please take me to your meetings next time—invite me. To each one of the representatives here, I believe that you more than anybody else know your constituents, your people. Please invite us to be part of your programs and outreach community services.

Chair Torres:

To add on to that, Director, I think it is important to note that even I have had conversations with Metro, and there is an undoubtable difference between undocumented immigrants not reporting crimes to Metro. It seems to me that should be at the core of the work that the ONA is doing. We know that immigrant communities are significantly less likely to report domestic violence; immigrant communities are significantly less likely to report assault; and immigrant communities are significantly less likely to report any type of crime that might occur against them. It seems to me that should be at the core of the work; making sure that we are finding and reaching out to those communities, talking to them, and letting them know they are safe here in Nevada and that they have access to resources. I look forward to seeing that work.

Mrs. Ramos Jones:

I am an immigrant, and when I came here I suffered domestic violence; I was afraid of calling the police. In my case, it was because as an immigrant that comes from a country that unfortunately is very corrupt, we do not believe in the police. We are afraid of calling the police because—what we are seeing now—whether it is because of the dependency on their spouse, because they are afraid of losing custody of their child, or sometimes because they believe if they reach out to the police or our office, they are going to be—you name it—deported or taken away, et cetera. That is why there is a partnership with Metro, it is something that I personally take very seriously because like you said, I have lived it. I know the immigrant communities are afraid to speak to the police and the government.

Chair Torres:

We look forward to seeing similar partnerships with undocumented groups and community members.

Assemblyman Carter:

My District is not far from here; East Las Vegas, 42 percent Latino. My questions center around how much freedom ONA is being given to do their job. I worked on and got passed—with a lot of help—AB 407 to protect all of us in general, but immigrants in particular, from allowing the DMV to release personal data without due process. We succeeded in getting that passed, and I have not seen that promoted much.

You talked about the fear of going to the DMV—I remember that distinctly—raising my sons in East Las Vegas, the Latino children would have to leave to go pick up their parents from work because their parents were afraid to get a driver's license; we need to send the message that we are serious about it being safe. Also, I know this is a bit of a lecture, but talking at the higher level of government, we have a situation here and it is because I firmly believe of the lack of effective communication with the diverse communities on the East side where the I-93/I-95 Corridor got retagged and redesignated as the I-11 Corridor. Rather than going around the City, we are stuffing more traffic through the urban core. The East side, my District, already has the worst air quality in Southern Nevada and now we are going to make it worse. The excuse from NDOT is, well, the people along the beltway turned in the questionnaires about not wanting that traffic along the beltway—where it honestly belongs—but the communication between NDOT and the community over here was totally ineffective.

That brings me to my question, and it centers around the leadership in the Executive Branch. Governor Lombardo, when he was head of Metro, bragged about deporting 10,000 immigrants. He bragged about finding loopholes to deport immigrants, and he recently—very publicly—went on the news and bragged about supporting Trump who is bragging that he is going to have giant sweeps and wipe out neighborhoods like mine. Is ONA being supported and empowered to do the mission that the Legislature created and supports ONA for?

Mrs. Ramos Jones:

I have been in this office for only four months, everything that you have seen is what I and my team—for the last three weeks I believe, it has been Vincent and I—and for the last almost two weeks, it has been just me. I have been here for four months, and I am a businesswoman; I wrote a business plan, and I made a commitment to go out there and meet with all the partners in the community—with the different communities. I did something that I called “the listening tour” because my story and my experiences are only mine. I wanted to make sure that I heard more stories, that I was immersed in the immigrant community because it is a big community. I hate to say documented or undocumented—I do not like to categorize people in any way—but there is not only two categories, I wanted to make sure that I know more about those other categories. The other type of documents like visas, hear stories, and make sure that I knew what we—at ONA—were doing in the past in order for me to set realistic expectations and goals for my office. Regarding the question about your District, I would be more than happy to have a follow up meeting with you to address those specific issues. Regarding what you addressed regarding our Governor, I do not have the power to respond to that question, please refer to him directly.

Assemblyman Carter:

Thank you and I appreciate that. The main thing I was asking is, are you being empowered and given the autonomy to do the job properly?

Mrs. Ramos Jones:

What specifically you are talking about; I am the Director of the Office.

Assemblyman Carter:

Are you being given the freedom to truly do what the intent was; to develop good communication with the immigrant community—I am only saying immigrant because I agree with you. Are you being allowed to do your job the way you believe it should be done?

Mrs. Ramos Jones:

Yes, sir.

Assemblyman Carter:

Thank you.

Vice Chair Flores:

I will echo your comments that I have had an opportunity to see both of you at multiple events throughout the State, and I appreciate your presence; you are a small but mighty team. I feel like you both have to run for office, you are constantly campaigning and going from event to event; you are ready to run, and I do appreciate that—I sincerely mean that. I also appreciate your comments about that documented and undocumented, you see it in these programs, refugee resettlement status is so fluid. You are undocumented the day you get here; you soon apply for asylum; you get a work authorization within six months. All of a sudden you are an asylum seeker as XYZ happens, then all of a sudden it has been approved and then later down the road, you are a resident. I say that for the record more or less to remind folk that are scared of the undocumented word that it is temporary for a lot of our folk; it is a very fluid reality that a lot of our folk live.

I am curious to know how the conversations are going with the local jurisdictions. I had a lot of one on ones with different State agencies particularly on a bill that I was working on, which was SB 373, I believe. One of the things that I was trying to figure out was whether or not we can have access to federal money. My understanding from Title 6 is that if you are receiving federal funding, you have a requirement to fulfill language access requirements for vulnerable populations, right?. If a local jurisdiction is getting federal dollars, you need to ensure that vulnerable populations have access to those resources, whatever that programming may be. One of the questions that I have had in private—but I do want to bring it to a public forum—is whether or not you have access to federal dollars when you are getting, specifically as a line item, federal funding. That is where I have seen pushback from some of our partners in the State—where there is a disconnect—and I do not know the exact answer to it, but is it happening in the rooms that you are in; the conversations that you are having now because obviously everybody talks about money. Every single time we bring up translating a piece of paper ensuring that somebody who may have some form of disability. It is not what we vocally speak, right? There are so many different methods of communicating depending on what the necessity is for that vulnerable community. I am trying to understand how deep we are getting into these conversations. Are the local jurisdictions engaging in that? Are we talking about getting money federally and not putting that responsibility on the State? I wanted to get a bigger perspective of what is happening in these conversations.

Mrs. Ramos Jones:

I would also like to have a follow up discussion with you as I do not have—at the top of my mind right now—that specific topic. What I can tell you is that the beauty about our office is that we are allowed to receive grants and any type of funding. If any of you come across anybody that wants to offer help for one of our programs for the immigrant community, please bring us to the table because we would like to take advantage of that. I took note of what you specifically said, and I will follow up with you on that.

Vice Chair Flores:

I think we were not having those conversations for a long time and COVID really brought out some of the disparities and inequities within different communities. That is when we realized it, when we had one directive coming out on Monday and we were by directive 20 by that same day; getting that information to the community was very difficult. Then we started realizing that we should have been having access to capital before; but I would appreciate that. If I can work with you whatever we have to do, I want to continue that conversation. In one of your slides, Director, you mentioned that you have had the

opportunity in the last four months to help, I believe 78 folks—which is great, obviously. I saw, in that slide, refugee resettlement language is one of a couple of things that ONA does, but I was curious to learn more about how these 78 folks got to you. How they were directed to your office and what services you provided, so we can get more in depth.

Mrs. Ramos Jones:

Who we are serving, is anybody that comes to us to ask for help. Sometimes it is through the Governor's office, it comes directly to us, it comes through the partners—the refugee resettlement partners, it comes from members of the community, and sometimes it comes from the Governor's office. When a constituent or a citizen come and ask for help when it comes to immigration or to navigate the system, that is what we are trying to help them with; think of ONA like a connector. When you come to this country everything is new for you, you do not know where to start, you do not know where to go grocery shopping, you do not know where to get specific paperwork, you do not know anything. That is what we want to be for that community so when they come to us, they can ask us literally for anything. The majority of the cases we receive are cases involving the DMV. We will have a meeting very soon with the Director of DMV, the refugee resettlement agencies, and the consulate so they can show the DMV the different documents that people from these communities and countries bring with them and they can get familiarized with the documents. We also have people that come and need help from the Federal Delegation, that is why I say that we work closely with them. We have great communication with all the federal level offices, and they help us with constituents, but mainly the Governor's office, community partners, and refugee agencies.

Vice Chair Flores:

This is very helpful to understand what objectives we are trying to hit, understanding that things happen. We all set—particularly in government—we set timelines and things do not always hit exactly as we plan, but I do appreciate that. I was curious to know what you see the role of ONA—when working with State agencies and other local jurisdictions—do you feel that the door is open to where they are taking direction and they are listening to ONA, and then they are working to implement, or do you see them operating more of a silo and then reporting back to what you are doing?

Mrs. Ramos Jones:

No, absolutely not. During the last four months, we have received great collaboration from different organizations within the State. We are working closely with the DMV, and one of the things that we are doing is identifying the gaps. When I came on board, I wrote a series of programs that I wanted to develop but after meeting with the organizations and after meeting with the DMV, Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR), and GOED, I found that there are already great programs within the State that the immigrant community can take advantage of. At this point, we are identifying those gaps and ONA will aim to be that connector because—as an example—I had a meeting with the Builders Association. They told me; Iris, right now we can hire 50,000 people, and I told her I know where they are, the great skills are here. We immigrants come here with a different mindset; we are going to do what it takes because we know what it took for us to be here. I told her, I am going to introduce you to those people, and we are working on developing a pay program to bring those immigrants and provide them with workforce development opportunities. To your question, my experience in the last four months working with State agencies has been nothing but great. They are very receptive, and they listen. Every time I meet with them, I bring them the gaps that I am finding, and we are collaborating, yes.

Vice Chair Flores:

This is more of a comment, Director. I foresee, with everything that is happening in Ecuador, I know they are going through some really horrible turmoil out there. I suspect that we are going to start seeing a lot of folk from Ecuador making their way and hopefully resettling here and finding a new home; we look forward to working with you there.

Mrs. Ramos Jones:

It is my whole family, each one of the members of my family are back home, so it is not an easy thing for us. I understand that they are working right now to get temporary protected status (TPS). We have already requested a meeting with the Catholic Charities of Northern Nevada, so when that happens she can provide information to the Ecuadorian community about TPS.

Chair Torres:

I hope that you are also working with AB 275 (2019), which will help a lot of TPS recipients. Especially given that it allows for them to have access to professional occupational licensure using the education that they have already received, as long as they meet all the eligibility requirements; that is another way for them to have economic opportunity. I know that ONA has been an advocate in the past for helping people navigate the licensure process using AB 275, so I look forward to seeing that.

I am going to ask you a couple questions regarding specifically AB 266 and the implementation of AB 266. I was proud to champion that piece of legislation during the 2023 Legislative Session, and seeing its rollout is an important part of the legislative process. I have spoken to local governments that are starting to do the work and figure out what they need to do but the rollout seems to be really late. The funding for the Language Access Coordinator was made available on October 1st, but it seems to me that it is not until early February that we are going to have a Language Access Coordinator starting that work. In that amount of time the local governments are working under a very strict timeline; can you explain why it has taken the ONA so long? I understand that you assumed the role in September, but it seems to me that a four month hiring process is too long. Especially given that local governments are waiting on that information, waiting for those resources in order for them to do their job to the maximum capacity.

Mrs. Ramos Jones:

I think Vincent can talk a little bit about the interactions that we are already having with the different local government as we are actively working with them. It is not that ONA has not been doing any work regarding the hiring process, it has been a surprise for me too, since things take a little bit longer in the public sector than in the private sector. What I can guarantee you, Assemblywoman, is that we are going to deliver results, and we are going to deliver them by the deadline.

Chair Torres:

It is not about delivering it by the deadline, it is about delivering it a month ago so that the local governments can get the information they need to you by the deadline, so I am a little concerned about the rollout of that. When we ask the Legislature to fund \$250,000 for an agency—which was the request of ONA—for that money to not even be touched until then—I think it is disappointing. I am looking forward to seeing the work that the Language Access Coordinator does because you are right, a two man team is too small, so we funded a

third person, which really is going to be for when the administrative assistant is replaced, right? I look forward to seeing this office move quickly to make sure that that rollout is done, because my understanding from local governments is that a toolkit and things of that sort have been pretty minimal at this point. What work have you done to engage with local governments and to find out what their needs are throughout this process?

Mrs. Ramos Jones:

I look forward to meeting with you to better understand your expectations so we can deliver results. Vincent is the liaison on and has been in charge of this specific bill, so he can probably deliver comments.

Mr. Nava:

In terms of communication that we have had, it has been the cross-sector language access group that we started meeting at the beginning of 2023. As I mentioned before, we started meeting with them ahead of the rollout of AB 266, because we wanted to ensure that there was work taking place in advancing language accessibility throughout the State of Nevada. Even if it was local community members, but thankfully government agencies also stepped in and were part of that conversation as soon as AB 266 was rolled out and released. We are thankful for having that sector group that meet once a month; throughout the month we have been meeting with them and updating them. We are waiting for the hire that is going to take place in the next week and a half, or so, to carry out the bulk of the work in implementing it.

Chair Torres:

I want to go to another part of the presentation, which was a discussion of the appropriation of \$25 million to language access from the Governor's office, which is only for FY 2024–2025, which I find is odd. Given that it was a pass and approved, when we had the presentation from our staff earlier today, it was mentioned that only one agency has applied for a funding of \$250,000. What is the ONA doing to maximize information to State agencies and to develop support so that they know what to do to apply for these grants and that they have plans that they can roll out, because otherwise it is \$25 million wasted.

Mrs. Ramos Jones:

In the month of October, we sent all the agencies a document that talks about the overview of the language access plan as well as the requirements, responsibilities, and the timeline on the implementation. Vincent has information we have already received from some government entities and their feedback; we also had some questions regarding a word, specifically. We have been working with them, it is a matter of hiring the person. It has taken longer than we wanted, but she is going to start on February 5th.

Chair Torres:

Just to be clear though, AB 480 has nothing to do with the lack of Language Access Coordinator because the Language Access Coordinator was specifically to implement the duties that are rolled out by AB 266. There is nothing that impedes the Office from fulfilling the goals of AB 480, making sure that agencies are doing that outreach. Right now, I want to stress the importance of making sure these agencies are applying for this money because there is money available, and we have stressed the need for language access funding consistently. Part of the push back from State agencies has consistently been that there is a lack of funds, that being said, this bill was restricted specifically to State agencies. Local

governments that are actually creating plans—I have talked to them and many of them have been working on these plans diligently—could benefit from some of this money, but will not be able to. They will not be able to touch this money, and I think it is the responsibility of your Office to make sure that this money is being used; that people are understanding how they can apply for these grants because the FY 2024–2025 is going to be coming quickly. It sounds like it is five months away, but it is really just around the corner, and we want to make sure that, that funding is maximized.

Are there any other additional questions here in Las Vegas or Northern Nevada? It does not appear there are any. Thank you.

Mrs. Ramos Jones:

Thank you. It was a pleasure.

Chair Torres:

At this time, we will go to the next item on the agenda, which is public comment.

AGENDA ITEM VI—PUBLIC COMMENT

[Chair Torres called for public comment; however, no testimony was presented.]

Chair Torres:

Members, are there any additional comments before we adjourn?

Assemblyman McArthur, I know you are generally so chatty, I am surprised by your quiet nature today. Anything you want to say, maybe a happy new year?

Assemblyman McArthur:

Madam Chair, what is it that you want me to make a comment on that we need on the record? This is one of my first times coming to this, although I have been in the Assembly for quite a few sessions, but this is a new interim committee type thing that we are coming on and this is one of my first times.

Chair Torres:

And your favorite one?

Assemblyman McArthur:

Sometimes.

Chair Torres:

Thank you and let the record reflect that this is McArthur's favorite Committee—we appreciate that.

It does not appear there are any additional comments from Members. Members, if you do have any suggestions of things that you would like to look at during the interim please feel free to send them my way or to Mr. McDonald or Ms. Ruedy, and we will take a look at that; if you are interested in any specific topic for consideration. Finally, please note that our next meeting will be Thursday, February 22nd at 12:30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM VII—ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Velazquez
Research Policy Assistant

Jered McDonald
Chief Principal Policy Analyst

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Selena Torres, Chair

Date: _____

MEETING MATERIALS

AGENDA ITEM	PRESENTER/ENTITY	DESCRIPTION
Agenda Item III A	Jered McDonald, Chief Principal Policy Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB)	Committee Brief
Agenda Item III B	Jered McDonald, Chief Principal Policy Analyst, Research Division, LCB	Summary of Government Affairs Related Legislation Approved by the 2023 Legislature
Agenda Item IV	Jered McDonald, Chief Principal Policy Analyst, Research Division, LCB	Overview of Language Access Laws in Nevada and Other States

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