



**JOINT INCLUSION COMMITTEE (JIC)  
FY23-2024 BUDGET RECOMMENDATION 20230322-025  
PUBLIC SAFETY PRIORITY – FIRST RESPONDERS, REQUIRE CERTIFIED ASL  
INTERPRETERS BE DISPATCHED TO A SITE WITH DEAF SURVIVORS**

Date: March 22, 2023

Subject: Joint Endorsement of the Mayor’s Committee for People with Disabilities’  
FY23-24 Budget Recommendation 20230310-4: First Responders, Require  
Certified ASL Interpreters to be Dispatched to a Site with Deaf Survivors  
(JIC Public Safety Priority)

Motioned by: Commissioner Jennifer Powell      Seconded By: Commissioner Raul Alvarez

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MAYOR’S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITES RECOMMENDATION 20230310-4:

**JOINTLY ENDORSED RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL ON FY23-2024 BUDGET**

**WHEREAS**, Austin’s Deaf population is the 5th largest in the United States; and 20% of the State of Texas’s entire deaf population resides in the Austin, Texas area; and

**WHEREAS**, a crowd of attendees attending the April 8, 2022 Deaf Nation Expo at the Palmer Events Center were injured after a vehicle had crashed into several people gathered near a food truck; and

**WHEREAS**, Deaf residents pay for City services including EMS, Fire, Police who are dispatched to a site after 911 is called through Video Relay Services; and

**WHEREAS**, American Sign Language and English are two distinct languages and an extensive use of figurative language in the English language may pose translation problems for Deaf individuals; and

**WHEREAS**, there has been a misconception that Deaf individuals can ‘compensate’ for being Deaf merely by writing on a piece of paper or even that they should have to; and

**WHEREAS**, American Sign Language does contain critical variations specifically based on facial expression which can accidentally become lost or changed through alternate methods of communication such as texting or writing on a piece of paper; and

**WHEREAS**, the present inability of attending City of Austin first responders to fully and immediately effectively understand all people in their preferred manner of communication can create critical gaps in understanding communications including during emergencies; and

**WHEREAS**, providing reliable and accurate means of communication between first responders and the people they interact with is essential so Deaf residents are fully included throughout Austin, Texas public life; and

**WHEREAS**, all Austin residents do have a right to receive reliable and appropriate first responder City of Austin services in the language which they best understand and are the native speakers of; and

**WHEREAS**, equity is not realized in the City of Austin unless first responders can first fully and clearly communicate with Deaf residents at a rescue site in their preferred language; and

**WHEREAS**, clearly explaining to Deaf individuals the City of Austin emergency services they are receiving in the language they best understand at a treatment site is a government which works for all; and

**WHEREAS**, clearly explaining to Deaf individuals the City of Austin emergency services they are receiving at a treatment site immediately following the accident is also open government.

***NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED***, the Joint Inclusion Committee collectively endorses the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities recommendation that first responders in the City of Austin are required to have Certified American Sign Language Interpreters dispatched to a rescue site where the 911 dispatcher was specifically notified there are Deaf survivors.

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ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 – 0

For: African American Resource Advisory Commission: Gregory Smith  
Asian American Quality-of-Life Advisory Commission: Hanna Huang  
Commission for Women: Rebecca Austen  
Commission on Aging: Amy Temperley  
Early Childhood Council: Raul Alvarez  
Hispanic/Latino Quality-of-Life-Resource Advisory Commission: Amanda Afifi  
LGBTQ+ Quality-of-Life Advisory Commission: Charles Curry  
Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities: Jennifer Powell

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

Absent: Commission on Immigrant Affairs: Juan Vences-Benitez  
Human Rights Commission: Idonna Griffith

Attest: Jeremy Garza, Staff Liaison, Equity Office:

x Jeremy Garza