



Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, TN

Legislation Text

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A resolution recognizing January 22, 2024, as Language Justice Day in Nashville and Davidson County.

WHEREAS, on January 22, 2009, Nashville voters rejected a proposed Charter amendment that would have required that all Metropolitan Government business be done in English; and

WHEREAS, known as "English Only", the proposal would have required that all official actions and communications of the Metropolitan Council be done exclusively in English and would have required all meetings of Metropolitan boards and commissions be conducted in English as well; and

WHEREAS, Nashville voters rejected this proposal by a percentage of 56.4% to 43.6%, with a significant voter turnout for a special election; and

WHEREAS, Nashville for All of Us brought together a diverse, cross-sectional coalition of nonprofits, community groups, unions, businesses, and residents spanning the Metropolitan area including the Coalition for Education about Immigration, Conexion Americas, TN Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition, Kurdish American Youth Organization, American Civil Liberties Union, Nashville International Center for Empowerment, Scarritt Bennett, Bridges, TN Equality Project, the Nashville Area Chamber along with the Hispanic, Latin American, and Chinese Chambers of Commerce, Justice for Our Neighbors, Catholic Charities, 11 presidents of local colleges and universities, religious organizations including the Interdenominational Ministers Fellowship, Islamic Centers, Jewish Federation, the Catholic Diocese, Unitarian Universalist Church, Clergy for Tolerance, multiple law, marketing, media and public relations organizations such as NPR Law, Ozment Law, McNeely, Pigott, & Fox, Bone Law, La Noticia, as well as many other organizations and people from across the social and political spectrums to defeat this proposal; and

WHEREAS, a prior effort to implement "English Only" policies had been made in 2007 by the Council and was vetoed by Mayor Bill Purcell; and

WHEREAS, over the past 15 years, Nashville has recognized the importance of providing services in languages other than English in order to meet the needs of its residents; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission published the Metro Language Access Report which examined communities with limited English proficiency and deaf and hard-of-hearing communities in Nashville and Davidson County, with a focus on immigrant and refugee communities; and

WHEREAS, this report provided essential guidance for Metro departments and agencies to understand how these communities interact with Metro and what areas contain the most needs; and

WHEREAS, after this report, efforts have been made to increase language access in Nashville. Nashville.gov pages can be translated into over 75 languages. Metro Council meetings are available in Spanish and Arabic closed captioning in real-time, and Spanish language interpretation is available at Council public hearings. In addition, many departments provide information in multiple languages; and

WHEREAS, in addition, after the 2023 election, the number of immigrants on the Council is at an all-time high and the newly formed Immigrant Caucus has also identified language access throughout Metro a priority; and

WHEREAS, while these efforts have helped to increase access to Metro services, the need to embed and promote language access in Metro is still great; and

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission, in collaboration with the Tennessee Language Center, developed a language access pilot program that partners with five Metro departments to understand and fulfill their language access needs at no cost to the departments; and

WHEREAS, from this pilot, Metro hopes to glean quantitative and qualitative information to build a foundation for implementing a language access program Metro-wide, taking into account the different functions and needs that Metro departments have that would affect language access; and

WHEREAS, two events are scheduled on January 22, 2024, to mark the occasion of the defeat of “English Only.” A celebration will be held at 9:00 a.m. at the Nashville Farmers Market and a community discussion will be held at from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Southeast Community Center; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper to recognize January 22, 2024, as Language Justice Day to celebrate the improvements made to language access and access to the services offered by the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County and to recognize the work still necessary to ensure an inclusive city for all.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. That the Metropolitan County Council hereby goes on record as recognizing January 22, 2024, as Language Justice Day in Nashville and Davidson County.

Section 2. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.