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>> Hi. There I can't see. I have a very limited view. I can only see you and the interpreter and it's blocking the gallery. I just wanted to let you know.

>> Yeah. So are you able to seat interpreter?

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Do you feel you can still follow? Even though it seems a little smaller. I just --

>> Yeah, yeah. It should be okay. I can pin the three of you. So I think that that's okay and the two interpreters and you. Some of the windows are a little smaller than I'd like, but we'll try to make do.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Okay. Okay. That works. Let me start the meeting, but thank you, everyone, for being here. Hello, everyone. Good afternoon. It is my pleasure today to welcome you to the DMAS forum of link and disability access. Today, we have a special topic and we will be discussing how agencies assess language proficiency. For those that are new to the forum, I am Montserrat Serra. I am the rights manager and I start working in DMAS in 2019. My role at the agency is to insure Virginia Medicaid, our program, complies with zero rights laws by providing disability access services to Virginia Medicaid members and applicants. I'd like to give a big thank you to our civil rights team. Sarah and Jesus Perez, who is the civil

rights compliance specialist. Thank you both for helping out, plan this event and for also assist. Jesus will be clothing questions so that we can answer them at the very end.

So let's briefly go through the logistics. This presentation is being recorded and will be available for viewing later at the DMAS website. We will be sharing also the slides and in the meantime in the chat, if we want to see who is joining us today, feel free to share your name, your job title, the organization that you represent in the chat so that we get a better feeling who is virtually joining us today. And if you have any technical difficulties, send us an e-mail at the civil rights coordinator@DMAS.virginia.gov. If you have any questions, we will view them in the chat and view them individually.

The last thing I wanted to point out is that we have two American Sign Language Interpreters today. Thank you very much for joining us. And if you're going to be following the event and watching the ASL interpretation, you can turn on your sign language mode. All you have to do is go to your settings. You will see a screen like the screen capture that shows right here where you can choose if you are a signer and then you'll be able to see the interpreters bigger on your screen.

All right. So let me walk you all through very quickly through this easy agenda. So we're going to start with the opening keynote with Director Ford. Then we will have a brief presentation regarding tips on Spanish language assessments for bilingual stuff. Around 1:30, we will have the panel discussion. And we will have Alicia, the Director of graph and Director Hill join us in this discussion. And towards the end of their panel discussion, we will open the floor for any questions that anyone may have. If you have questions, please put them in the chat and my colleague Jesus will be keeping track of those. And then we'll just have closing remarks.

So with no further adieu, I would like to introduce Director Ford. He will be opening the forum for us and over the course of his career at DMAS, Director Ford has led work on Medicaid policy, reimbursement, ability appeals and related decisions making. So he has extensive experience managing Medicaid financing, the payment methodologies and federal compliance and has worked closely with the general assembly and the centers for Medicaid, Medicare and Medicaid services and complex problematic and fiscal matters. He was -- he's a return to DMAS. So we are grateful to have him back and Director Ford, the floor is yours.

>> Steven Ford: Thank you for that nice introduction. I'm not going to take up much of your time today, but I did want to just welcome you to this event. DMAS is committed to strengthening access and making your programs easier to navigate for all we serve. It is called meaningful access. Sometimes at DMAS, we have impediments and sometimes they're outside of our control, but some are within

our control. We have the ability to mitigate things such as language and disability through various accommodations and we strive to do that. We're actually discussing how to work towards meaningful sites today while at DMAS, we're dealing with external barriers to access being imposed by federal mandates. Among other components, federal work requirements and increased frequency of eligibility determinations will certainly reduce access to our programs here. And while we have no choice but to implement freeze provisions, it highlights to expand our reach so that we can minimize the negativity of these changes. We really can't avoid the impacts, but we can minimize them through effective communication and outreach across all the populations and needs that we serve. I think that example kind of illustrates the goals of today's event, which is to engage and strengthen partnerships at a minimum, learn from each other in terms of best practices which is very exciting. I'm not able to stay through the entire meeting this afternoon, but I do want to thank you for your participation today and I look forward from hearing from our folks what we learned from all of you today. I appreciate that and I hope the rest of the program goes well.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Thank you. Thank you very much and as you said, there's nothing we can do about changes in federal regulations or any other type of regulations. We continue our efforts here and this proves -- this event proves we all want to continue contributing to language and disability access to make our communications effective and meaningful for everyone. So thank you for being here. Thank you for sharing words with us. I appreciate.

All right. So as I said earlier, usually if you have attended previous forums, we have a very brief presentation about the topic. And I usually like to present on something related to the topic, but something that also we have created at the Department of medical services assistance. Today I will briefly be discussing tips on language Spanish assessment for bilingual staff. This is an initiative that Jesus and I, our civil rights unit has worked very closely since we start implementing the language and disability access plan at DMAS. And when we created the language and disability access plan, we realize that we had quite a few bilingual staff at the agency that said they were bilingual staff, but we were not sure if they were really bilingual staff. That's why we thought that we needed to create and develop a language assessment for bilingual staff that speaks Spanish. That is something that we are doing internally and later during our panel discussion, we would be able to hear where our panelist how they implement language through their agency. Well the me go through the process here at the Department of medical assistance services.

So why assess language proficiency? Well, many agencies they do rely on bilingual staff to communicate with the public. As I said, being bilingual doesn't always mean being professionally proficient.

So that has a risk if we think that we have bilingual staff that aren't competent then we might have the risk there is miscommunication or maybe, you know, the individual rights are being impacted because there is interpretation errors or their might be issues with the program integrity because we don't have an accurate communication. And that can create compliance errors. So that's why as I explained earlier, that's why we found the need to have or to insure that those that are bilingual save they have an accurate and effective communication when they connect with the public. So what we decided to do, um, is to create a bilingual assessment and we did it because we felt it was needed. We needed to confirm that bilingual staff were competent with the language, but also because we wanted to meet federal compliance requirements. There is -- there are two major laws established that they create these obligations. The first one is tile 6 of the civil rights act, which prohibits discrimination based on national origin and then the second law that -- and this one section 1557 of the affordable CARES Act is more for healthcare organizations. It applies specifically to federally funded health programs. And reinforces language access requirements. And under the affordable CARES Act, there was a regulation that said we needed to use competent interpreters. How do we determine their competency level that was the question that we came across and the answers we needed to develop competency assessment. So under these laws, agencies must provide meaningful seas for individuals with limited English proficiency or we refer to them as LEP. The regulations also emphasize the use of qualified interpreters and translators and agencies should avoid relying untrained staff or family members or minor children to interpret sensitive or complex information.

So again, why does the Department of medical assistance services develop a Spanish language assessment? So at DMAS, we conducted a needs assessment. We learned that our primary language system is phone interpretation services, but we also learned there were a few employees that were bilingual and utilizing their Spanish skills to assist with interpreting for members. So we were very grateful for their work. But -- so yeah. Basically a lot was being used through phone interpretation services but then we thought by having bilingual staff and being able to complete their competency assessment was going to be very helpful because they will be more readily available. So some divisions that use them more because they have more contact with members but then it also provided better customer service when we used phone interpretation services, those serve us are very helpful because we can use them right away. The personal touch one that translation or interpretation is provided by a bilingual staff provides a better customer service. And then utilizing stuff that are fluent using the language it also creates a cost reduction. So we don't have to utilize phone interpretation services when we have someone that is fluent and competent and has Spanish as their second

language. So let me move on to the next slide.

So we had to decide who takes the assessment, right, and when they had to take the assessment. So when we have ADMAS newly hire bilingual staff, then we go to them and ask them if they can complete the bilingual assessment. So we just want to make sure that they can continue using their skills when they communicate with the public and then we also identify that we had current employees that they are utilizing their skills, their Spanish skills. So we also ask them to complete the assessment. Right now I believe we have a list of 7 if I'm not wrong. Seven current Spanish speakers that work at DMAS and they utilize their skills and they have positive competency assessment. So what kind of tasks do they usually do? They are usually task-related to speaking with the public over the phone or in person. They also sometimes can provide interpretation services and they also complete translations. So the level of involvement with this task is minor. They have other duties, but if an opportunity comes in and they can assist with going in person to the lobby to help interpret, it is very helpful for us.

All right. So when we determine and we spend some time trying to determine the different levels that we could assess, individuals that were Spanish speakers, we determine that we would have three different levels. So we establish level 1, which is language skilled. That usually goes for general public interactions and if someone has more knowledge on English and Spanish, then they can qualify for level 2, which is professional qualified. Currently everyone that has passed the assessment, they've at level 2. So they can -- they can interact and have complex a little bit more complex interactions and formal translations with reviews. So if they complete a translation, they are always asked to provide that translation to our teams so they can have a final review. And then the last and third level is level 3, which is certified and that would require having some sort of certification for interpretation and translation and those are used for highly complex communication and specialized proceedings. So we determine those three levels that someone could fall under. All right.

So if you're interested in a little bit more details on how the assessment is performed, we define pretty much 40 minutes oral exercise where we provide an exercise which is consecutive interpretation. We just have a dialogue with the bilingual staff to make sure that, um, they can provide consecutive interpretation. And then we also ask them to complete some Spanish developer responses and the purpose of the exercise is just to test their fluency and their accuracy. Then we also give them a written exercise that takes around 40 minutes and we ask them to complete two brief translations. They are given like 30 minutes to complete it and then they have to transmit the translation back us to and we also have a professional background questioner where we ask them if they have any

certifications or what is any other type of experience that they have. And then yeah. Those are pretty much -- usually we conduct those. We block a couple hours to make sure they complete these two exercises. And then once they have complete the exercise, we also ask them to review an acknowledgment guide. And that guide provides a little bit information about the ethics and the responsibilities that they have as Spanish interpreters or translators and also it limits then the bilingual language assistance. What that means is that if they encounter a situation where they need to translate something that is very complex or, um, that can impact the rights of the person, we ask them to handle those two so that we can find someone that is certified to complete that type of translation or interpretation. So we had to give them some sort of scoring just to make sure to -- that we know what level do they fall under. So each exercise is score using a standardized one. We evaluate areas such as their comprehension, their fluency, their vocabulary, their grammar and language control and task completion and professional experience. And then each exercise has a maximum score of 28 points and staff must meet a minimum threshold to demonstrate that competency. So if they would get a 15, then they will be placed under level 1. And using the standard rubric, it was very -- it's very helpful for us because it makes the process more objective and consistent and it also helps supervisors better understand what staff are to do based on competency level.

So we found that it was very important to keep as where of qualified staff. So every time that someone completes a competency test, then we keep them or add them to our list. And the list usually includes the employees name, the position, contact information, the assessment date, the competency level and the authorized settings that they can interpret or translate. This allows managers and teams to quickly identify qualified staff when -- and you have to insure that staff are only used in situations that much their assess competency level. So this is for documentation purposes very helpful and I suggest that as something that might help your organization.

All right. So lastly on this presentation, I just wanted to run flew some of the lessons -- run through some of the lessons that we learned. So first agencies should assess bilingual staff before a sign language dependent. Just because someone says they're bilingual, it's important we assess their level before they start interacting using the language. Secondly, it is also important to clarify competency levels. So staff understands the scope of what they are authorized to do. Again, if it is complex, situation where language can get very complex or like the conversation can impact, highly impact the wellbeing of that person, then we ask them to escalate that and we can get some what certified using the standard rights helps create consistency and furas across evaluations and we

also learn that ethics training is extremely important and staff should understand confidentiality, interpreter roles and when they should step back and use a professional interpreter instead.

Finally maintaining that updated list of qualified bilingual. Staff has been very helpful for operational purposes and that's it. That's pretty much how we have completed our language assessments or bilingual staff and just thought we were going to make sure of these. For others to learn about how that can be completed and if you have any questions, feel free to enter them in the chat or reach out to us. We'll be happy to share or experience with the assessments. Again, if there are any questions, we'll just address them at the end of the presentation.

All right. We're moving to out of bound negligence portion of the forum. This is my favorite section and that is where we invite different panelists to discuss the topic. In this case, I explain about foreign language assessments, but we're also -- we also have some experts here not only to discuss foreign language assessments but also ASL, American Sign Language assessments. I feel this is going to be very helpful. We have with us today Alicia. She's the language seas coordinator, community engagement team, Office of innovation and economic development. She's joining us from Sacramento and I'll let them introduce themselves right after we start the presentation --d panel discussion.

We also have Director RAFF. He's also a Director for the Virginia department for the deaf and hard of hearing. We also have Yan MA. She's also a language access coordinator and we have Elizabeth Hill with the Department of the New Jersey Department of human services. As you can see, we have a very good mix of state agencies as well as individuals that work with local agencies. So I think it's going to be a very good conversation that we're going to have today.

So let me start with the very first question for panel discussion and I always like to have them introduce themselves. So I think we can go by order how I can see their names popping on my screen. So if you can briefly describe your agency and the role that bilingual staff play in communicating with the public, then we can start with Director RAFF.

>> Director RAFF: I want to start with our mission statement. I think that captures the essence of what we do. So Virginia Department of the deaf and hard of hearing removes barriers to effective communication so that persons who are deaf and hard of hearing can fully participate in the programs and services. And we are a unique state agency where our programs and services focus on both communication so language and access. We're a small Department of 12 staff members and we have services in three different categories. We have telecommunications, sign language interpreting and community services. Those are the three different categories. All of the staff here are bilingual in ASL American Sign Language and spoken

or written and reading -- written and read English. So we have a background of deaf services and most all of our staff, most of us are proficient in American Sign Language. Some deaf staff here have a different kind of skill called code switching and that means changing to be able to accommodate whoever they're speaking, whoever individuals communication level is. So I think that wraps up my part and I will turn it back over to you.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Thank you. Let's move on with Alicia. She's next on my list.

>> Alicia: Hi, everyone. Thank you so much for having me here. As background, the City of Sacramento released a language access policy in May 2025. So this is our 1-year anniversary of having that. And one of the key recommendations that came out of an audit was to create a dedicated position to facilitate language access including the coordination of bilingual staff. Very similar to DMAS, bilingual certified staff do communicate regularly with the public during regular business hours Monday through Friday. Both on the phone as well as in person at one of our many public counters or out in the field. So for police officers and code compliance officers, for example. Bilingual staff are usually the first go-to resource for in person interpretation for many reasons that Montserrat already outlined in terms of trust building and better customer service. And bilingual staff are involved in over half of the documentation requests. They may do the initial translation as well as proof reading. We have a two-person quality assurance system just to make sure that things are being produced at the highest quality possible. And if staff don't speak a language that's requested by a member of the public when they go to a public counter or if they call a city department, that's when we'll use our phone interpreter service. Very similar to your organization. And in regards to communication public, I also interact with folks at community events. We strongly believe in meeting people where they are. So handing out in language terms and marketing to let them know that the services exist both professionally and that there are many bilingual certified staff in our city. And finally, another one of my roles is to coordinate with our community Ambassadors. This is an award winning language and cultural justice program. So this years cohort has 18 Ambassadors who speak 15 different languages. In addition to the staff, they are an enormous asset in our city in terms of getting information about city services in different languages while also being culturally sensitive.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Beautiful. Thank you, Alicia. Thanks for sharing. Dr. Elizabeth Hill? You want to go next and introduce yourself?

>> Hello, everybody. My name is Elizabeth Hill. I am the Director for the division of deaf and hard of hearing with the New Jersey Department of human resources. Like my colleague Director

RAFF, we are a fairly small department with a larger state agency. My vision is similar to Director RAFF. It is to reduce barriers for residents that are deaf and hard of hearing and provide education and technical assistance for those seeking information on how to accommodate or work with an individual who is deaf and hard of hearing. So because most of the population we serve may be users of sign language whose primary language may be sign language, some of our staff members are bilingual in both English as well as American Sign Language. And some of the staff members are deaf themselves and part of the community along with the population that they serve. So we also unique in that our agency has a language instruction program that serves children between the ages of 0 to 5 to provide them a language communication in those critical early years. So we also hire physicians who titled deaf language associates who work with the children to teach them sign language and the primary requirement for these deaf language associates is sign language fluency. So in addition to the deaf language associate as well as our deaf and hard of hearing specialist on the team, we are -- we're an agency that uses bilingual focus on a daily basis. We also have sign language interpreters. So using dual languages is part of what we do every day.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Thank you. Thank you for introducing your agency and for giving us a little bit of your background.

If we go to Yan, if you want to explain a little bit about what your agency does.

>> Yan: Sure. Thank you. Hi, everyone. Thank you very having me. My name is Yan MA. I serve in the Office of immigrant affairs. Our office was just officially qualified in this past March. This is the duty for us and the community we serve. We are small but mighty team of 3. My supervisors serve as chief of immigrant affairs who oversee the policies, strategy and build a relationship with each department and senior leadership. My colleagues handles outreach activity and I serve -- I make sure the language access program is implemented across our department.

In our team, they both speak Spanish and I speak mandrin Chinese. Bilingual staff in the center of all this whether someone works (inaudible) or right into the (inaudible). Community events. If somebody does not speak English or English is not their first language, having bilingual staff makes a real difference. And having bilingual staff is not just about removing language barriers. It's about making people feel heard, feeling trust and dignity. More about making sure that not speaking English is someone gets left behind. So I think that's part of me. Thank you.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Thank you so much. So yeah. I see our common theme right here T. seems like all of these agencies they all work with bilingual staff either whether it is with a foreign language

or with American Sign Language and that shows the importance of having people that can relate with our customers or services so that we all speak the same language can be very, very helpful for the community. So thank you, everyone, for the introduction presentation.

So I'm going to be asking this question. I think you guys are doing good at keeping it around 3 minutes and we have plenty of time. If you can summarize within 3 minutes approximately, what led your agency to implement the language testing for bilingual staff and how long has your program been in place? I think some of you touched a little bit on this, but if you can share a little bit more details on how long has your program been in place and any other details that you can share and we can follow the same order. So we want to start with Director RAFF first.

>> Director RAFF: Okay. I will share two experiences. First was the previous state where I joined. This was with other state office for the deaf and hard of hearing. We had already had a formal policy in place. And that was called the -- the duplicate language -- I'm sorry. Assignment. Excuse me. Of duplicate language or bilingualisms. That was their policy. And the policy language employees. So we had already had it in place there. And they were certainly some challenges when we decided to rename to deaf and hearing employees at the Office of deaf and hard of hearing. I know that there were some bilingual competencies we needed as well. So we were trying to accommodate the policy design the way the language was originally written. So we wanted to allow the bilingual employees to interpret. That was in the policy, but our staff was not qualified at the time. They were not qualified to interpret. They had a different approach on how to measure those types of call fixations for interpreting -- qualifications for interpreting. But spoken language did accept some face to face communication and interpretation with the third party of the interpreter. So sign language, you are not able to do that. We would not be able to use staff. We would have to use staff interpreters that were already trained. If they were already trained interpreters, they were allowed to, but staff bilingual were not able to because language proficiency and interpreting proficiency is very different. With spoken language, there tends to be a mix of being able to interact with and work with departments and accommodating policies for our needs. And so that's a little bit different. We had to changed policies to suit our needs. Now the policy has a 5% increase in pay for their workers who are labeled as bilingual employees. And that's in Washington State. Now here in Virginia, there's no formal policy that I'm aware of. When I first joined, most of the staff at the time were not proficient in sign language. Many deaf community members came to me and complained saying that they were unable to successfully communicate with staff. So there were, you know, they were able to have a few basic conversations, but most of those staff

members have retired or left so far and since then, we have rewritten the job descriptions to require sign language proficiency to be able to communicate with the clients who are coming as walk ins, to be able to interact with them as well as over the phone and with visual virtual technology as well for visual communication. So all of our staff, or most of our staff are proficient in sign language. And we have been doing an informal assessment for that and I will expand a limit bit more on that -- little bit more on that later.

So that's how we're gotten there. So I will turn it back over to you.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. I'm happy to here we have two experiences in one person. So thanks for sharing the Washington State experience and the Virginia experience. But yeah. Let's go ahead with Alicia, if you want to share your experience, what led your agency to implement language proficiency testing.

>> Alicia: Sure. So our HR department is the one that administers the tests through a third-party company. And we outline all the current and newly certified bilingual staff. The third-party company started doing testing about 10 years ago starting in 2017, but the city does have records dating back to about 2002. But unfortunately, we're not really sure about the procedures because it pre-dates the current staff. So I can only guess as to the motivation behind the origin of the language proficiency testing. The City of Sacramento just diversity of languages I think speaks to a large part of that diverse -- that reasons for initiating proficiency testing. In 2024 according to census data, (inaudible) speak more than 30 different languages and 39% of residents speak another language at home. And a percentage of people with limited proficiency is 17%. So that's about 84,500 people. So I think even a decade ago and even beyond that, you know, there was a need to provide meaningful communication with residents through bilingual staff. And as you mentioned earlier, testing staff proficiency really ensures a baseline started for quality in terms of communication and interaction. And finally, bilingual staff are performing an incredibly important service to the public and they should be compensated for their skillsets. There also may well is been a need to advocate for an official testing process to certify they were in fact bilingual.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Thanks for sharing. Director Hill, if you want to go next.

>> Director Hill: Yes. Am I adjusting the previous question or the question that's on the screen?

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: The question -- did I switch it? Did I change the question? I did change it. Sorry. The previous. Thanks for pointing that out.

>> Director hill: Our agency has been performing for deaf and hard of hearing. Having skills in the sign language is a core part.

Specifically for language proficiency testing, there were two things that came about though. One was the -- the establishment of our language instruction program. I did mention for children 0 to 5. And part of the core requirements for the deaf language associates and working with the children is that we really had to be sure that they had a high proficiency in American Sign Language to be able to teach children. So part of that program's implement anticipation was implementing the language proficiency testing which we do with an external vendor to make sure they have a certain score on their proficiency rating to insure they do in fact have the ability to pass on language skills appropriately for the children.

The second thing that came about was also when I came on Board here as Director, the only way for me -- for some of you who work for state agencies may be familiar with some of the hiring requirements that go in working with state government, but initially, the program titles that would only be available hiring were program specialists, which is a pretty broad title in being able to hire. And what I am very proud of is that during my tenure here, we were able to get a title specifically for this division called a deaf and hard of hearing specialist in which the requirement is to be proficient in sign language and part of that is to insure that we have a proficiency reading score or reading scale that shows that you are in fact able to communicate in this language. So those two things in particular. In language instruction program originating in 2019 and then the civil service title for the deaf and hard of hearing specialist was a couple of years later. So those two things. I will turn it back over to you.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Thank you. I see a lot of progress with initiatives from the starting point and listening to feedback or seeing what is happening with the program. We can progress and fit the needs better. What is your experience, Yan MA? Can you share some of your agencies proficiency and testing?

>> Yan MA: Yes. For us, it is coming down to recognizing the gap. You mentioned LA. Being bilingual is not the same as being able to communicate accurately in professional public service setting. For us, our job, there are real consequences for the people we serve. And having this language of professional testing also open an internal communication regarding job duty, and compensation. If someone using their language skill as part of their job, that's true to be formally recognized. And we had this program since last year at such an early stage of the program, but we have foundation there. We are building from that. So that's part of our situation.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. I see a common denominator on some of the responses and also the pay and increase and how you can assess really that they are competent to receive that pay increase. So that's very interesting. Thank you so much all for sharing.

So let's move on. For foreign languages in particular, we

mentioned different languages. Which language does your agency currently test for and does your program include assessments for American Sign Language and we can start with Alicia again.

>> Alicia: Sure. So the third-party company that we use tests in about 85 different languages for their listening and speak tests. Currently we only test staff for their oral proficiency. But for our Ambassadors, they are tested for their reading and writing skills as well. Our city has more than 200 bilingual certified staff out of about 5,000 employees. And they speak 25 different languages. Thank willy we have the most bilingual staff resources which is representative in our community and Russian and Ukrainian are the next top languages as well as a handful who speak mandrin and Cantonese. And the number of bilingual staff fluctuates depending on whether someone may be retiring or separating from the city as well as whenever we get new bilingual staff. One of the things that I worked with our HR department on is to organize. I really love -- I'm jotting down some things on what you described for what you include in your directory as I think that's really excellent in terms of marking down the level of competency or proficiency. One of the things that was requested by people who use this directory is to be able to see staff organize not only by language, but then by department so that they know if someone needs to, you know, have a police officer who can speak a certain language. They can search it by language and then by department. Unfortunately, the provider that we used does not test for proficiency in American Sign Language; however, I do know of one staff member who is brushing up on their ASL so they can get certified and so I have identified a few different organizations that can provide that certification such as waiting until the official request comes through so we can get them officially certified as our first ASL staff member.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Thank you. I'm real impressed with those numbers of having over 200 employees being tested. That's quite an amazing accomplishment. Thanks for sharing your thoughts.

We can go to Director Hill.

>> Director Hill: Yes. The mission of deaf and hard of hearing tests include assessment for American Sign Language we do use external vendors for this process and as I mentioned before, we have been doing this for a couple of years now.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Yeah. We can go more in depth about your experience with those vendors. But yeah, yeah. Which languages does your agency currently test for?

>> Yan --

>> Go ahead. Sorry.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: You can go Director Hill.

>> Director Hill: We test for American Sign Language. I do know that our department has recently had a language seas law passed. So for the top seven languages, some of the other agencies have

mentioned. So other divisions are doing more in that area who our primary focus is the language proficiencies for American Sign Language.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Yeah. Yeah, Yan, go ahead.

>> Yan: I'm sorry about that, Dr. Hill. So we currently approved a languages, Arabic, Spanish, Mandarin, Chinese, Russian, Vietnamese. I think that is mostly because it depends on the top people population in the country. Besides those, we have access to the broad range including a.m. wreck, Turkish, German, ban goalie and others. We have really good flexibility. Depends on what our community needs at any given time. That is a good future for us. For American Sign Language, we are not offering an assessment for that language. Our situation is Baltimore access program is separate with accessibility. But we're look think for some collaboration for the futures.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Thank you. Thank you for your response. Director RAFF, if you want to go next.

>> Director RAFF: For spoken language, we rely on you all as experts. But for sign language, again, I mentioned earlier that we have two different methods that we use. So there is face to face communication of testing both receptive and expressive communication skills. Comprehension, clarity, turn taking and face to face communication. We also on the interpreting side, that's a separate thing and it's a separate group, a separate pool of interpreters where we look at their national certification if they have been certified nationally. We also have what is called the Virginia quality assurance screening at VDDHH. We assess their proficiency in providing and we provide diagnostic feedback to help them to improve their interpreting skills, but that is not a certification. That is just a type of credentials that recognizes that they are qualified to interpret in certain settings. So those are the two categories we have. Communication and interpreting.

Now, we do assess both staff and contractors and I wanted to explain for the staff, it's more informal and then for the contractors we have more of a formal assessment process and I can expand more on the outside vendors later about what we use for the interpreting assessment.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Yeah. Thank you very much. Very interested on learning the vendor aspect and who does everyone use and who they use that. So we're going to get to that question soon. For right now, how does your agency assess language proficiency? For example, what skills do we usually evaluate and whether they use internal assessments or external vendors. And we can start with same order. Alicia. Sorry.

>> Alicia: Just checking. Yes. As I mentioned, we have an external vendor for our language proficiency testing and the staff have to receive a score of 8 out of 12 for their language and speak

test to qualify as bilingual certified. We really try to keep in mind that the goal of communication in government is plain language. So being able to speak and write at a 6th to 8th grade level and being able to communicate with the broadest range of people on a broad range of topics. So for staff who receive an 8, basically what that category means is that they make some mistakes. They may not have perfect grammar, but they can still convey the message. They can participate in most general conversations, but they may have some trouble with more advanced or highly technical terms. And so we do have a process for situations that are more complex or for documents that are highly technical or perhaps contains legal language, how to be reviewed and approved by our city attorney. These are situations where I will highly recommend that we move forward with our professional vendor or professionally certified interpreters. And because staff are not tested on their written proficiency, that is something that's on my wish list. We do have that, you know, the two staff person system so that if one person translates, another person will proof read.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Interesting. So for the oral exercise, right, how do they do it? Is it like an hour exercise they complete? Do they do in person? Virtual?

>> Alicia: It's all done virtually. So it's either done over the phone or through more of a video remote platform and it's basically a back and forth conversation. Being able to carry a conversation, being able to respond to, you know, different questions and that sort of thing.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. So from the American Sign Language testing, how do they do it, Director Hill, for your agency?

>> Director Hill: So for the language proficiency assessments, we have potential candidates to get a signed language proficiency interview rating. It's called SOPI for shorted. It is an interview. And those are performed by external vendors; however, there may be deaf people or people who are fluent in sign language who may happen to be what's called a certified deaf interpreter. So if they already possess certification from the registry of interpreter for the deaf, we also accept that. We recognize that language proficiency language is not the same as implementation goes, but we will accept if they have certification that's proof of their language fluency. As Director RAFF also mentioned, there is a separate category of interpreters we also hire. And we check there are certifications if there are current certifications with IDs and that is checked on an annual basis. So we do differentiate between the two fields, but many overlap.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Thank you. Thank you. And Yan, I understand that your agency also use ALTA as an external vendor. Seems like a very popular vendor.

>> Yan: Yes. Yes. And they have a credible standardized

result. So that's why we're using with external vendor. It brings objectivity. It is removed internal. Give HR leadership the credible and standard results they can use when they make (inaudible) about job descriptions and job classification and compensation. This -- yes. You mentioned we use ALTA. So our assessment goes beyond just that. It covers speaking, listening, writing, reading and comprehension. There are real skills that matter when our staff can use (inaudible) when they directly are facing the public. So this distinction is really important to us.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Yeah. I see similar to us, we encounter more situations where verbal is more needed. So it makes sense that we put more effort on assessing oral skills rather than (inaudible) skills. Thank you. Thank you for sharing your response. And director RAFF, yeah. Can you provide us a little bit more details about the external vendor? You wanted to share a little bit more on that.

>> Director RAFF: Sure. Yeah. As I mentioned, with the staff, we used an informal approach. So with me, when I first joined, now I've hired quite a bit more staff, but the panel we have three staff evaluators. A panel of 3 staff evaluators that will adjudicate machine's expressive and receptive language. So then once we go through the panel, it will get to me and I will go throughout interview. I will turn my voice off and make sure that myself and the candidate can understand each other. And, you know, if I'm hiring a hearing person or a hearing person is up for the job, then I will make sure they turn their voice off as well. When I'm working with contractors, I know Liz mentioned there are a few providers of national certification assessments. So one of them is -- excuse me. The flippy, the sign language proficiency interview. So we do recognize that with our contractors and -- excuse me. Director RAFF's video froze a little bit. So hold on. Do you mind going back? Director RAFF, can you see me? Do you mind going back? Your video froze briefly. Okay. So the -- as SLPI is where we left off and then it froze. Okay. Great. So yes. We'll use the circumstance LPI with -- SLPI with our contractors as well and require to pass before getting any type of contract with us. As far as the staff goes, we do start with the informal, but we do plan to transfer to a more formal assessment after the hiring process. So I can expand again on that a little bit later. And then for interpreters themselves who have already taken the SLPI, they're waved. They do not have to take it again. But they need to show me proof of certification if they did pass previously. I'm sure Liz in New Jersey I think you have the same practice if I'm not mistaken.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Excellent. Yeah. I see Director Liz also uses the SL PI and -- SLPI and Alicia and Yan, they use the (inaudible). So it seems like we are working with the same team in DMAS. We also do similar to Virginia Department for the deaf and

hard of hearing. You also do the informal or assessment. That's a wide range options. Yeah. This conversation I think is very helpful for others to get some ideas if they need to implement language assessment. But let's move on because I'm interested in learning more. At what point our staff tested? Do you usually test them and I know that some of that has been explained. Director RAFF was explaining during the hiring process, but if you want to elaborate more, is it done during the hiring, when you are requesting bilingual duties or periodically when they're providing services in another language. And we can go back to Director RAFF so that he can expand if there's something to expand on that when that testing is performed.

>> Director RAFF: Sure. The staff is informal during the interview. It does change to formal prior to being officially on boarded. So that's again for our internal staff.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Do you all have the same? Is it during hiring for the rest of you? Does anyone want to add if it's not during hiring? It looks like most of you do it during hiring, correct? For Yan.

>> Yan manager A: This one has some nuance for us. For new hire, this really depends on job description. If your language certification list on your job description as condition of employment, yes. They will be required. But for example, it really depends on each department. My colleague served as the coordinator on the job description there is a list he needed to be bilingual, Spanish and language. But he still did not finish that testing yet. For me, as a current employee on my job description, there is no list. I have to be speaking another language. But I did this testing a year. I think this really depends on best practice for each department and organization. I'm not sure if we mentioned using external vendor to do this testing. Also there is cost. So I think, you know, we need to think about it more about our situation. This really depends on each department, each different position.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Yeah. Do you feel the same way Alicia? I didn't realize that people feel the same way with their role and they're asked to use their skills. Do you find that happening, Alicia?

>> Alicia: I have found that many seasoned save have been employed with the city for many years and close to a decade and they actually didn't know about the bilingual certification process or that there was a pay stipend involved with getting certified. So that is one of the things that I am actually doing. I actively recruit the people and encourage them to get cert tide whenever I present on language access to different departments. And the reason why we're trying to just constantly recruit folks is because it really helps spread out the workload. For some languages, for instance for Vietnamese and for the Chinese languages, I may only have a few people

who can read and write that language. So I'm not able to implement that internal proof reading process. And those limited staff people who speak that language receive the majority of the requests. It would make it more fair to be able to have more staff who are officially certified. And unfortunately, there are many staff I have encountered who are bilingual, but they choose not to get certified because they're kind of afraid of the extra workload and they're afraid that the stipend is maybe not enough compensation for the additional tasks related to language access. So again, I think there was a question in the chat that is really important to consider what would be a fair stipend that is representative of the value of that bilingual staff bringing to the job.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Yes. Excellent point. Yes. How about for your agency, Director Hill? Do you find it has been tested in the very beginning or people also being tested throughout?

>> Director Hill: It's mostly during the hiring process. We want to ensure that a candidate has the fluency level they need for their position they're applying for -- applying for. Once we have a score from the sign language proficiency interview, we don't can for that score again. However, for our sign language interpreters which are different groups, we do check for their certification that is valid on a yearly basis because we have a pool of part-time interpreters who are on our staff. And we want to make sure that the certification is kept and valid during times of employment with us. It is mostly during hiring process.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Yes. Excellent. With that certification, I want to express how American Sign Language Interpreters today were arranged by the Virginia Department for the deaf and hard of hearing. So for anyone working in Virginia, if you need American Sign Language Interpreters that are certified, reach out to Director RAFF's office because they do a very great job coordinating those so that we can have American Sign Language Interpreters. All right.

Moving on to the income question. Does your agency use an external vendor or organization to conduct language proficiency? Is this something we have already responded. Does anyone want to add a little bit more we have gone through a variety of the external ALTA and SLPI and doing it in house. Anybody wants to jump in here and add anything we haven't discussed? Maybe Director RAFF.

>> Director RAFF. This is Eric. So I do want to clarify. Sometimes we do see multiple approaches to sign language assessments. So the first approach would be training and that would happen maybe in house or we would outsource. Here in Virginia, our contractors are the formally assessed contractors with a group called Virginia sign language assessment. They are the external raiders. And it seems -- yeah. So, ah, we would develop people if house. It seems you froze again. So the external raiders and then -- after that. Seems okay now. Yeah. So all right. Great. So anyway, I will -- I

will hand it over after that.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Thank you. All right. So yeah. Let's move on to the challenges question. I think this might be helpful for the audience if they would like to implement an assessment for both language or ASL. So what challenges do your agency encounter when implementing language proficiency testing and how do you address them? And we can start with Alicia.

>> Alicia: Hi again. We encountered a challenge recently for our community Ambassadors we opted for an AI-based testing for oral -- for speaking proficiency. And so one of our Ambassadors has a very high level of Spanish, has a Ph.D. and the test basically told him that he was not fully fluent, which he found kind of offensive and we realized that while it is important, we believed to have a system for standardization as well as activity that we're not quite ready to turn that over to AI and machines to test that that we really should have opted for a human person who would have administered the test. So that is one regret that we have one good learning experience.

A couple of other things is that one -- not necessarily in terms of administering the test, but in terms of once someone has been certified as bilingual and they appear on the directory is how to understand what are the appropriate usages making requests of bilingual certified staff. I received many questions that we're trying to figure out and navigate and create protocols for. Should folks reach out to staff in their own department first. So the answer for that is usually, you know, yes, depending on the language, of course. Some other questions we have gotten is if one department staff does a translation of a document for a different department, can they build that Department for those hours? And so the answer that we determined was no because they are receiving a bilingual stipend. Some of these requests may be city wide. And also do bilingual certified staff always have to say yes when requested? And the answer to that is no. It is always important to recognize what's on their plates and what the current workload is and they need to ask their supervisors. I try to be very accommodating and polite. Let me know if there's too much, I will go to the next person. So those are some of the challenges we have been navigating.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Sounds right and probably be a Q&A question and answer that might be appropriate since there might be so many people at your locality trying to use those bilingual staff. Interesting. Definitely we haven't run into those issues, but something to keep in mind. Director Hill, do you have any input about challenges that you have come across?

>> Director Hill: I think the most general challenge I can speak to is just more awareness within the larger community about sign language proficiency being different than a sign language interpreter and their certification. So I think I have come across

situations jut as a whole where there maybe positions being advertised as meeting fluency, but making it very specific to having certification from the registry of interpreters for the deaf, which is unfortunate because some of those positions may not necessarily need sign language interpreter. They're just asking for a sign language proficiency, which is a different category. By doing that, then you are excluding a lot of people who themselves may be deaf and sign language proficient. They're just not interpreters. So it's just I think a general challenge is more of an awareness and education on a difference between wanting to have proof, proof or verification of a person's proficiency and sign language versus asking for certification you are in fact a design happen interpreter. And those are very important differences.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Yeah. Yeah. Seems very common with the ASL. Yeah. For your agency, Yan, do you come across any challenges you'd like to share?

>> Yan MA: The biggest challenge right now is alignment. The language of bilingual staff when they are using their language skill is difficult to be formally recognized in their job duty and conversation. We are trying to encourage everybody to take this testing because there's a process to make your job be formally recognized and also be prepared for future (inaudible) to show that job duty is in your pay.

Another ongoing challenge for us is it's difficult to keep pace with your community because the language of your community speaking is non-static. It is as shift as new community moving or some community move out. In Baltimore County, we have the demographic. There's a small population of the community, but they request most of the service and there is another big community population community and they barely request the service. That is the kind of challenge of something we're always working on.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Yes. Very interesting point. Thank you. Thank you for sharing that. And Director RAFF, any challenges you would like to share that you have encountered?

>> Eric RAFF: Yes. I wanted to expand on the awareness. When I was in Washington State, and I moved there to find that their policy was a one size fits all approach, so I had to keep explaining to them and advocate that it applies that American Sign Language applies to the deaf community and that the civil rights act, the ADA both of those apply. And so that was something that needed to be considered. Also to try and resolve that -- but also to have each of those there. Also, anything requiring a bilingual requirement needed to have that case load. Or everybody thought the applicants assumed they needed to have that case load. Not everyone had clients like that. Our services were more related to interpreting and coordination and accessibility and things like that and so forth. And so is there was a lot of community engagement involved and we had to explain to

the community to look at the person and see if they're a part of the community. Myself as a director and I was deaf when I -- when they were hiring me. They had to have an interpreter for every staff meeting and things like that. I told them they could communicate directly with me and so it seems that everything worked out in that sense over there. The important part is that if half of the staff are deaf, everyone on staff needs to communicate with each other. And not necessarily if they have their own case load or not. It's a small difference between spoken language and sign language but some of those differences have been a challenge as well to try and address.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Yeah. Great. Thank you. Thank you for sharing that feedback. As the last question that we have, um, since we have a lot of agencies joining us today, is there any experience that you like to share with them? Any advice that you would like to give agencies that are considering implementing a language proficiency testing program? We can start with -- with Alice. Alicia, sorry.

>> Alicia. Yeah. Sorry. While it's incredible we have this very robust bilingual certification program in our city, there is always room to grow. And so I have definitely been compiling a list of my wish list including some things I learned from you all today. So I really appreciate this. I would definitely suggest having staff tested in both their spoken proficiency as well as their ability to read and write in that language. And that way you could potentially provide two different stipends because I think for at least in my city, there are many more people who speak the language than maybe proficient in reading and writing. I think that's an additional skillset. That should be compensated accordingly. I love the idea you brought up of having the ethics training. I heard of many cities that have an annual training on kind of best practices as well as ethics of interpretation, which I think is a fantastic idea. And earlier in your introductory presentation, you mentioned cost savings involved. That's very hard to do unless you keep track of data. So having a system of metrics to be able to document how many times our staff interacting with members of the public and using their bilingual skills. Something that we found recently is that we're very happy to have invested in our own in-house interpretation devices so that we don't have to go out and rent them if there is a meeting with multiple people who require interpretation. So that has been really helpful. And another thing is also showing appreciation for bilingual staff. Before my position, my position is pretty receipt just a little over a year I've been doing this work. I don't think they get recognition in all contributions they make. We participated in mother-long day for the first time this year. And we went around and filmed bilingual certified staff saying I am Sacramento. It is a chance for them to be recognized, you know, amongst their colleagues and departments. Something to be proud of.

We want to show that our staff is representative of our community. Something else that came up recently and something I'm currently working on developing is kind of an orientation onboarding meeting for newly certified staff. Right now they get their certification they don't really receive a lot of guidance when it's appropriate for their skills to be used. And so as part of that, I'm also planning to launch a survey of what are the big challenges and how can you be better supported. I want to better understand from their perspective what their needs are. I would also love to give a shout out to the City of Oakland, California because they're someone I recently got in contact with and they have an incredible program where they set bench marks and striving to have every city department have the same percentage of bilingual certified staff as the percentage of residents with limited English proficiency in their cities. So as Yan mentioned, being able to keep space with your community that language needs are not static and they're evolving, so for instance, if 10% of city residents speak mandarin, they're trying to make sure every single department has 10% of their staff who are bilingual certified in that language. That's not a bench mark system that we currently have, but I thought it was an incredible goal to strive towards.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Yes. Excellent. Thank you very much for all those tips and advice. Yeah. Having that much of the population with your interpretation or your individuals that are bilingual with that language is extremely helpful. Yeah. That's a reasonable goal to have. So yeah. With Director Elizabeth, can you share a little bit of advice with other agencies? What would you recommend to others that want to implement the language efficiency testing?

>> Director Hill: It really requires us. We cannot be static. We have to evolve in our understanding and ability to meet the needs of the communities that we serve.

One of the things I really love about this program today is talking between language and disability because I think it really speaks to the importance of the ongoing partnership between the spoken language community in this space of language access and the disability community because for a deaf and hard of hearing individual, we are literally asset interception between disability and language. We are both in a disability community but we are also in the sign language base and the language community. But here in New Jersey, we encounter individuals from very diverse backgrounds for some of you that may be aware. There are over 300 different sign languages in the world. And so for us as a team here, while it's important that we show proficiency in American Sign Language, we have to recognize that we also encountering on a daily basis individuals who may not be proficient in American Sign Language. They may have proficiency in a sign language or not in a country of their origin and here in New Jersey, they can help seeking accessibility to programs and

services. So while we rate when we try to get scores for language fluency in American Sign Language, they are also looking for that ability to use some of the visual communication needs that allow us to connect with individuals who may not have a sign language American Sign Language may have a different sign language. So disability I think is critical to continue that dialogue between our two communities, the spoken language community and the disability community specifically the deaf and hard of hearing because while I have so much in common, we have areas that districts different things and having that dialogue to understand what we have in common, what may be different in creating that education awareness is key. I thank you for having this forum today on this topic.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Thank you. Thank you very much for sharing your -- (inaudible) and advice for you, Yan, and your agency. Personally, do you have anything you would like to share with other agencies?

>> Yan: At first, Alicia mentioned treated your bilingual staff as asset. That's exactly what they are and directly speak with your community with their language is not a small thing. It should be formally recognized in their job duty and job description and a conversation. Second, I think it's like tied to your language skill with the job duty. If someone passed the certification, this testing, they should have a clear connection with what they expect to do in the role on a daily basis. Another one I think is again community. Know your community, look at your demographic and understand who you are serving. What languages they are speaking and beauty over program from there. Finally, I will say language Access Program is beyond interpretation and document translation. It is about outreach engagement to talk with the community and make your community feel where they're belonging. So if you have not really extended your program into the real community outreach, your program will be part of that way. So I think that's all coming from me. Thank you.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Thank you. I wanted to add a little bit more on the data and knowing your community because it is easy to get data on languages by going to the census and things like that, but it's not the same. You cannot compare that data with the people that you're serving because they don't necessarily have to correlate. So I think it was described before how important it is to keep track of your usage, the frequency of those languages that your agency contacts. So very important point. Thank you. Thank you for sharing.

So Director RAFF, any words of advice for other agencies that would like to implement language testing programs?

>> Director RAF. Yes. Absolutely. I totally agree with Liz. I think that we should be having these discussions and talking about employee assessments on the basis, you know, or being employed on

the basis of these assessments. I think that the important part to keep in mind is that we're supposed to be client centered. You know, most people have their own language skills and own language proficiency as well. So some deaf individuals are really, really great at catching certain language usage and then other people might be language deprived. So maybe a little delayed and struggle a bit more. The deaf community is certainly not a monolith. The hearing communities are very similar. Everyone has different levels of proficiency in English. It's really important to kind of gage that and make sure that you have the staff to accommodate for your community here at VVDHH. I think Liz, you said it best when you were talking about foreign language, sign language. It's really hard to find any sign language interpreters that know another sign language other than ASL. So we would typically use a deaf interpreter or certified deaf interpreter in situations like that and they could use more of a universal approach to bridge that gap, especially because we do not have like I mentioned those interpreters who specialize in those specific sign languages, but we do have deaf interpreters that could kind of use something gestural or that universal approach to make sure the message is clear. There are some clients that just don't know ASL at all and then they end up in court. They're in family court or that happens again in the hearing community, you might have spoken language. People using different spoken languages and then they have to show up and they're having to deal with all this jargon. So finding effective communication solutions and making that happen is really, really important. It's important for our community and the longevity of our agencies as well. So maybe again it's not a one size fits all. We can't just design it to meet everyone's needs. We really have to individualize our approach. Thank you again. Thanks for having me here.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Thank you. Thank you yeah. And that cultural aspect too I feel like when you speak the same language, you have a similar culture. You can -- the other person can trust you more. So it's very interesting for serve us sometimes when we try to explain our services. When someone from your own community whether it's the ASL community or the Spanish community or the Asian community speaks your language makes that service more approachable, then that community trusts you more. So I feel like it's very important to have bilingual staff with what's been shared before. It's important to have and recognize how important bilingual staff they are because they do a very great job in bridging that gap between the community and the services that we provide. So thank you all. We are gonna move on to the questions to see Jesus has been keeping track of the questions and see if there's any that we can help respond. Jesus, are there any questions? I haven't had a chance to look at the chat. But let us know if there's any questions out there.

>> JESUS PEREZ: Hi, Montserrat. Hi, everyone. Yes. We have a question from Katie Reynolds. She asked for there any fees or costs associated with the language assessments. She asked this question during the DMAS presentation. And she also would like to know if the assessment can be available for anyone to use.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Yeah. Definitely. So I believe this relates to the presentation that I provided and we -- there's no charge for that. There are no fees; assessment that I complete here it is something internal and it's an assessment that Jesus and I complete when we have someone that speaks Spanish and is going to be dealing with the public. So there's no fee to that. Yeah. We'll be happy. We're going to keep your contact information that we'll be happy to share the bilingual assessment that we have created if you're interested in mirroring or tailoring or get some ideas. Definitely. We will share with you.

>> JESUS PEREZ: And that's the only question that we have related to the presentation.

>> MONSERRAT SERRA: Okay. That sounds good. We will let everybody leave earlier today, but I really appreciate everyone here today. The interpreters, the captionist, the panelists. This has been a wonderful discussion and this is something that we developed or we implement every twice a year. We create a forum and we have topics and discussions because we want to learn from each other as we said it's part of our job to keep growing and assets the changes so that we can continue assisting -- we will be discussing in December. That's going to be our second forum and thank you, everyone. Thank you for all the wisdom and information that the panelists have shared with us today. It's been extremely helpful. I learned a lot and I hope a lot of the audience -- I see some clapping and I see some heards. I know a lot of people like your expertise. Thank you to the audience for being here as well. Have a good day is, all.

>> Yan: Thank you. Have a good day.

>> Thank you.