TESTIMONY OF JOSEPH R. MORRISROE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR -- NYC311 BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON GOVERMENTAL OPERATIONS AND THE COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY JANUARY 17, 2019

Good afternoon Speaker Johnson, Chairman Cabrera, Chairman Koo and members of the City Council Committees of Governmental Operations and Technology. My name is Joe Morrisroe, I am the Executive Director of New York City 311. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on 311 customer experience and operations. With me today are Samir Saini, Commissioner of the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT), and Dominic Berg, DoITT's Acting Deputy Commissioner for Business Solutions Delivery.

I'm honored to serve as Executive Director of 311 since 2008 and to represent the women and men of the 311 team. Since 2010, 311 reports directly to the Mayor's Office of Operations, an alignment that underscores the importance of this operation and service to the City. Prior to that 311 reported to DoITT. DoITT continues to provide technology services and general services administration and support for the 311 organization, and work collaboratively with 311 and the Mayor's Office on the continual evolution and enhancements to the service delivery and customer experience of 311. As Executive Director, I oversee all aspects of 311, from the operation of the most familiar component, the call center, to the creation and implementation of multiple customer-facing channels, performance results and quality control measures, interaction with City agencies, compliance with regulatory requirements, data collection, and most importantly serving our customers, the millions of residents, thousands of businesses, and numerous visitors and commuters to New York City.

The 311 process relies on systems supported by DoITT and partnerships with city agencies to ensure a customer has access to information, assistance, and services through a variety of channels including the call center, 311 Online, text, mobile app and social media. To understand 311 operation and customer experience, it is helpful to understand the flow of 311 service delivery, from customer inquiries and requests to the answers provided and actions taken, and the confirmation provided. With few exceptions, public interactions with 311 result in one of the following outcomes:

- 1. Service Request (the City needs to do something)
- 2. Information Request (when is my recycling pick-up day?)
- 3. Referral to an outside entity (MTA, NY State, FCC)

Since 311 was launched in March, 2003 it has received over 275 million calls and an additional 89 million customer contacts in our digital channels. Originally launched as a call center, New York City 311 has evolved into the most comprehensive municipal government customer service platform in the nation. Available 24/7 in 180 languages and multiple channels 311 received 44 million customer contacts in 2018. On an average day 311 interacts with over 120,000 customers and for an average month 311 receives 1.7 million calls and 1.7 million online visits to the companion 311 Online website, 172, 000 mobile app touches, 19,000 text messages, 23,000 online

chats and serves 1,800 customers on social media in addition to publishing city programs, information and services to over 500,000 of our social media followers. For further context, on an annual basis New York City 311 receives more calls than all other US City 311's combined.

The 311 mission is aligned with the Administration's goals and vision on equity and most notably focuses on providing the public with equitable service delivery through quick, easy access to all New York City government services and information while maintaining the highest possible level of customer service.

The 311 team is focused on "meeting our customers where they are" by providing an array of channel options to contact the City ranging from robust self-service solutions to outstanding customer service delivered by professional, polite, and well trained representatives. Over the last 8 years in annual customer satisfaction surveys conducted by the CFI Group, 311 ranked equal to or better in delivering customer service than the best contact centers in the private sector and also far surpasses the best in government centers. In 2018, 311's aggregate Net Promoter Score (NPS), the leading metric for gauging customer satisfaction across all industries in the U.S., exceeded the scores of Apple and JetBlue.

This outstanding performance reflects the dedication and commitment of the women and men who work at 311 and proudly serve their fellow New Yorkers. It is for these reasons that New York City 311 is the recognized model for service delivery and performance reporting for governments across the nation and around the world who study the "New York City 311 model" when considering launching their customer service platforms.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The success of New York City's 311 customer service platform over the years is tied to its ability to evolve and expand to meet ever-changing customer needs. To accomplish this the 311 organization collaborates with numerous groups to constantly evaluate the current state, receive and respond to feedback that drives improvement, and partner to design and create new initiatives that better serve the City and our customers. There are many partners involved with the ongoing tuning and enhancing of the 311 platform. A notable list includes the following:

- The Mayor's Office of Operations for strategic direction and policy.
- DoITT on technology initiatives and production support.
- City agencies for programmatic and procedural information.
- Elected officials and Community Boards for feedback and insight.
- Open government and open data advocates who provide fresh ideas and perspective.

We also gain insights from the front-line team at 311. These are the people who understand interactions between New York City and its constituent's very well because they do it on a daily basis. Above all we listen to the feedback of customers who contact us every day. The care that goes into providing both the customer service agents and the public with the right information is

the same level of attention and detail assigned to make sure the data intake and collection throughout the 311 process is accurate and complete.

A few examples of how we have enhanced customer experience based on this critical feedback are:

- Adding "Bike Lane" as a new category for illegal parking.
- Enhancing our content to include the NYPD's "Bee Unit."
- Adding "Taxi Complaint" to the Mobile app.

NEW 311 SYSTEM PLATFORM

As I'm sure the Council is aware, DoITT is leading an effort to deliver a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform to replace 311's 16-year-old system. The main purpose of this project is to completely replace the back-end technology. Although many of these changes will not be visible to the public, a new offering will be Customer Account Management functionality. A customer will be able to build and maintain their own account in the CRM, so they can effectively manage their relationship with the City as they choose.

DATA and PERFORMANCE

Another important aspect of 311 is providing data and performance results that focus on ensuring transparency in city government by making information that might be helpful and relevant to the public accessible and understandable, where permitted by law.

This effort includes organizing the 311 resources and organization structure to ensure proper collection and cataloguing of information received, as well as the data input to the system, and DoITT's work in building and maintaining the technology and tools that make the data available.

Whether an interaction is performed with the assistance of a 311 representative or the customer self-serves via 311 online or the 311 mobile app, the same data elements are captured and fed to the business intelligence platform. This is a critical and deliberate consideration that ensures consistency in data fields and lists of values, and standardization in structure and formatting necessary for users to access and utilize data sets and reports.

311 works with City agencies to ensure the most up-to-date information about City services and resources is available and disseminated across the various customer channels. The agency information presented to the customer and the representative follows a plain-language standard to promote understanding and clarity.

The information captured by the system and fed to the agencies and the centralized business intelligence tool is formatted in standards that allow cataloguing, compilation and publication. The 311 content management team structures the information for every city service - over 5,000 unique pieces of information - in a way that makes it unique and accessible to users in the call center or with the mobile app and by the business intelligence system.

This careful design and regular curating of the content ensures that the information provided to the public is correct and the resultant data is useful, accessible, and understandable for our customers. The 311 quality assurance department further ensures the accuracy and credibility of data by inspecting and measuring the intake process with customers and the data entry process performed by representatives or customers. This quality control step is vital to subsequent use of performance results and data.

Consumers of 311 data include members of the public, such as residents, business-owners, and visitors, as well as City agencies and elected officials.

311 data is accessible through a variety of options. These include a suite of offerings known as "Citywide Performance Reporting," which is managed by DoITT and available and summarized on the Mayor's Office of Operations website on NYC.gov. A sampling of these offerings shows the scope of data sharing and multiple uses of the source data. And includes:

- NYC Open Data. The NYC Open Data tool managed by DoITT increases the accessibility of public data generated by 311 and various New York City agencies. As part of an initiative to improve accessibility, accountability, and transparency in City government, this catalog supplies access to a repository of government produced, machine-readable data sets. The data sets do not include personally identifying information. Over the past 365 days there have been 2.8 million page views.
- 311 Service Request Map. A visual representation of the location, frequency, and concentration of Service Requests filed through the 311 system at a street or intersection level, as well as by zip code, Community Board and City Council District level.

Intro. 188 – Anonymous Complaints – Councilmember Matteo

While 311 understands the intent of the proposed bill, we believe that what this bill proposes would have two unintended negative consequences. First, property owners could potentially "game the system" and skirt city code and law requirements by calling in false complaints and then receive immunity for three months.

Second, it would impact a constituent's rights to freely report a quality of life issue without fear of retaliation or other harm. Customers at such risk by a change to anonymous reporting criteria are many, but two tangible examples are immigrants and tenants.

Additionally, Council recently passed new local privacy protection laws that endorse a "minimum necessary" standard of collection and disclosure of personally identifying information by City agencies, and which underscore the importance of anonymizing such information whenever appropriate – as would certainly be the case for circumstances involving risk of personal harm.

311 wholeheartedly agrees with the spirt of the legislation and shares the same passion for providing access to city information and services to those who English is not their primarily language. In fact, 311 services, over 1 million calls in 2018 in languages other than English. For context, on an annual basis New York City 311 receives more calls in languages other than English, than the City of Los Angeles 311 receives total calls for all languages. The proposed law would require 311 to implement a process for identifying non-English speaking customers. 311 has a process in place with our interpretation services vendor to provide an initial interpreter who will identify the spoken language or dialect of a customer. This is a requirement of the Citywide Language Services Contract. The proposed bill would also require that 311 examine every disconnected call and determine the cause of the disconnection. 311 has a robust quality assurance program that review calls of all types to ensure the best customer experience for every customer contact. I have spoken to industry leaders in voice recognition and interpretation services and the consensus was that the technology to support the bills requirement is not yet available and not expected to be for many years.

Finally, on behalf of my colleagues, I thank the Speaker, Chairmen Cabrera and Koo, and Committee Members for your time and the opportunity to testify. Before I turn it over for questions, I would like to personally extend an invitation to all members of the committees to visit 311 to see the operation and meet the City employees on the front lines of customer service. I am happy to take any questions.

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Testimony Before the New York City Council Committee on Governmental Operations and Committee on Technology Hearing on 311 Customer Experience and Operations January 17, 2019

Testimony of Yoojin Kim, Project Coordinator The Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS)

Good afternoon. My name is Yoojin Kim, and I am a Project Coordinator at Korean Community Services. I would first like to thank Chair and Chair Koo, as well as the members of the Committee on Governmental Operations and Committee on Technology for holding today's hearing on 311 customer experience and operations.

For over 40 years, the Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS)has been operating under the mission of empowering immigrants so that they become independent and thriving members of the community. KCS primarily serves the Korean American community through its diverse programming in the areas of Aging, Education, Immigration, Workforce Development, Public Health and Mental Health.

Language access is one of countless barriers that Korean New Yorkers face. As of 2018, almost 70% of Koreans in New York were foreign-born, and more than half (52%) of Korean New Yorkers were Limited English Proficient (LEP). This language and cultural barriers that they face are compounded by the fact that they are often unfamiliar with the City's social service systems and processes. This demonstrates the vital nature of language services provided by New York City, particularly through its 311 Language Line.

The provision of Language Access Services by New York City is commendable and illustrates the City's commitment to serving its diverse populations. In order to help improve the customer experience and the quality of services provided through the Language Line, I would like to share a few stories with you today.

As a project coordinator working directly with the Korean community, I have come across many unfortunate customer experiences with 311's Language Line. Many of my clients explain that they have a difficult time navigating the call, as it takes some time to get to the Korean language option. This sometimes leads to many Korean callers believing that there is no Korean language service available, and they hang up prematurely before they can be assisted. Moreover, when a caller selects number 7, the Korean language option, the automated Korean voice message is very difficult to understand, as it is not spoken in standardized Korean and the voice sounds very muffled. Lastly, the wait time until a Korean caller is connected to a Korean interpreter can be extensive, which leads to callers' drop in calls or frustration with the Language Line. For callers with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), this can be a confusing and trying caller experience, particularly as they already face challenges understanding and accessing city services that they need.

¹ King L, Deng WQ. Health Disparities among Asian New Yorkers. New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Epi Data Brief (100); March 2018.

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KCS Main Office	Corona Senior Center	Flushing Senior	Public Health and	Brooklyn	Mental Health
Adult Daycare Afterschool	Korean Mutual	Center	Research Center	Project	Clinie
Immigration ESOL	Aid Society		Workforce Development		
203-05 32 nd Avenue		42-15 166th Street		8710 5th Ave. 1FL	42-16 162nd Street, 2FL
Bayside, NY 11361	37-06 111th Street	Flushing, NY 11358	2 W 32nd Street, Stc. 604	Bay Ridge,	Flushing, NY 11358
Tel: (718) 939-6137	Corona, NY 11368	Tel: (718) 886-8203	New York, NY 10001	NY 11209	Tel: (718) 366-9540
Fax: (718) 886-6126	Tel: (718) 651-9220	Fax: (718) 886-8205	Tel: (212) 463-9685	Tel: (718) 630-0001	Fax: (718) 534-4149
	Fax: (718) 478-6055	• •	Fax: (212) 463-8347	Fax: (718) 630-	
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It is not only the provision of language services, but the experience and quality of language services provided through the Language Line that is crucial for New Yorkers with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) to access essential services and stay informed. It is also imperative that New York City expands its language services to include many other languages.

In this vein, we would like to suggest the following:

- Consult community based organizations such as KCS to ensure the quality of any voice automated messages and voice recording in non-English languages before they are put into use on the Language Line.
- Utilize language identification software or tool to recognize the caller's language when the caller dials
 311.
- Expand language access services to include more languages.

New York City has always been a leading example in providing language access for its immigrant populations. We hope that NYC continues to honor this commitment by considering suggestions provided in this letter.

We welcome the opportunity to further discuss these issues with you.

Thank you for your time.

KCS Main Office	Corona Senior Center	Flushing Senior	Public Health and	Brooklyn	Mental Health
Adult Daycare Afterschool	Korean Mutual	Center	Research Center	Project	Clinic
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Fax: (718) 886-6126	Tel: (718) 651-9220	Fax: (718) 886-8205	Tel: (212) 463-9685	Tel: (718) 630-0001	Fax: (718) 534-4149
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New York City Council - Governmental Operations and Technology Committee
Oversight Hearing - Identification of languages to the 311 Customer Service Center
January 17, 2019

Testimony of Louie Sawi, Policy Coordinator The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF)

Good Afternoon. My name is Louie Sawi and I am a Policy Coordinator of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF). I would like to thank the Governmental Operations and Technology Committee in holding this important introduction of amending an administrative code of the city of New York, which would develop a protocol for identifying the languages spoken by callers to 311.

Since 1986, CACF is the nation's only pan-Asian children and families' advocacy organization and leads the fight for improved and equitable policies, systems, funding, and services to support those in need. The Asian Pacific American (APA) population comprises over 15% of New York City, over 1.3 million people—the same size as the entire population of Dallas. Yet, the needs of the APA community are consistently overlooked, misunderstood, and uncounted. We are constantly fighting the harmful impacts of the model minority myth, which prevents our needs from being recognized and understood. Our communities, as well as the organizations that serve the community, too often lack the resources to provide critical services to the most marginalized APAs. We work with almost 50 member organizations across the City to identify and speak out on the many common challenges our community faces.

APAs come from countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Central Asia, as well as from the Pacific Islands. In NYC alone, we represent over 40 ethnicities, tens of languages and religions, and a multitude of cultures and immigration experiences. On behalf of the nearly 50 Asian-led and Asian-serving community and social service organizations in our membership, I ask the Council to consider the unique and diverse language and culturally competent needs of the APA community and pass Intro. No. 1328

<u>The Needs</u>: APA individuals and families face a multitude of barriers to success, one of which is language access.

<u>Linguistic and Ethnic Diversity</u>: There are over 100 Asian languages and dialects spoken in the US¹, and at least 40 Asian languages and dialects spoken in New York City.² The diversity of languages and dialects spoken by APA families makes access to government services and information challenging, and without language accessibility, these communities will continue to be isolated.

<u>Linguistic Isolation</u>: Our community is growing and we're growing quickly. According to the U.S. Census in 2014, 35% of APAs in NYC were linguistically isolated, which means that no one in the household above the age of 14 speaks English well. Most recently the percentage of APAs who are limited English proficient in New York City rose to almost 45%. That is nearly half of the APA community!

¹ National Education Association, http://www.nea.org/home/15555.html

² "Distinct Places, Shared Opportunity: A Neighborhood-based Analysis of Asian Americans in NYC," Asian Americans for Equality, Inc., February 2011. http://www.nyc.gov/html/dc/downloads/pdf/asian_americans_for_equality_report.pdf

This means that in our families, children often have no choice but to serve as interpreters, causing additional stress and anxiety for them and their family.

Last week, I myself attempted to call 311 speaking in Tagalog, the native tongue of my parents. The automated service used didn't recognize that language and failed to respond to me accurately. Immigrants must have access to quality translation and interpretation services in order to be able to ask questions or raise concerns about their housing situation; locate the nearest health clinic if they become ill; report when their garbage is not collected by the Department of Sanitation; or understand the services and resources they are eligible for in this city.

Recommendations: CACF's approximately 50 member organizations across New York City are direct service providers who work closely with APA students and families. We meet with members regularly to discuss the needs and concerns that APA community members face. Our communities have reported innumerable difficulties in asking for help from NYC government offices and resources, especially due to language barriers. In many instances, our communities report not being provided appropriate in-language services, and many times being provided services in a different non-English language than they speak.

CACF fully supports Intro 1328-2019, which puts in place an automated system to more accurately identify languages requested of 311, and also creates of system of reporting instances of call disconnects due to the failure of 311 providing appropropriate language support. Such a software MUST be able to distinguish multiple languages - more than what is currently identified including Asian languages. Data collected would be very useful in determining language needs of callers, including Asian languages, many of which are currently unknown. Data collected would also help inform the system as to beneficial changes that can be made to fully serve all limited English proficient New Yorkers.

Even if Int. No. 1328-2019 passes to become law, there are still major challenges to efficient implementation. CACF members have voiced the need for the inclusion of cultural competency training of interpreters and front line City Agency staff when interacting with LEP Asian Americans. Appropriate training including addressing cultural competency helps ensure that interpreters and front line staff are sensitive, that the interpreter uses appropriate language, that front line staff are respectful and acknowledge cultural practices, and that LEP individuals feel comfortable engaging with City Agencies. Additionally, CACF and its member organizations strongly encourage the City to apply the trainings to the developers of the automated language recognition software and guarantee that oversight of this system encompasses a diverse body of individuals that reflect the diversity of this City.

New York City has been a leader on language access and we hope the 311 customer service center will continue to honor this commitment by ensuring its accessibility of quality information and resources to Limited English Proficient speakers. We welcome the opportunity to speak with you further about these issues. Thank you for considering our concerns and recommendations.



FOR THE RECORD Commitment to Improve the Quality of Life

Thursday, January 17, 2019

To: New York City Council Committees on Governmental Operations and Technology From: India Home, Inc.

RE: Oversight - 311 Customer Experience and Operations.

India Home is a non-profit organization founded by community members to serve South Asian older adults. The mission of India Home is to improve the quality of life for older adults by providing quality care in a culturally appropriate environment. We serve more than 200 older adults across Queens through senior center programs, case management, community mental health program, recreational activities, and advocacy.

100% of the seniors India Home serves are foreign born and nearly 80% of them have Limited English Proficiency (LEP), which limits their understanding of and access to traditional services. As such, the culturally appropriate services that we and other grassroots organizations provide to immigrant communities are extremely necessary. Moreover, our members feel a greater level of comfort talking to only our staff members and rely on us as a first and sometimes only point of contact when accessing services.

As we know, 311 is providing telephonic interpretation services and translation services in over 175 languages. All services provided by the 311 Customer Service Center are available to LEP individuals that contact 311, regardless of language spoken. NYC Well states that it is available in 200 languages and DFTA's language access plan covers the top six languages and then uses 311 for over 175 other languages. Well-meaning language access plans such as those of NYC Well, DFTA or 311 are not always operational. In both instances, many South Asian older adults who are very limited in their English language skills get left behind. Through experiences of our community members, we found out that South Asian older adults cannot access these services, especially those that use large providers like Language Line.

178-36 Wexford Terrace Suite 2C Jamaica, NY 11432
Phone: (917) 288 7600 * Fax: (718) 425 0891* www.indiahome.org * indiahomeusa@gmail.com

Board of Directors Officers Mr. Mukund Mehta , President Dr. Amit Sood, Treasurer Mr. Ali Najmi, Secretary

Board of Directors Members Ms. Jaya Bahadkar Ms. AfreenAlam Ms. Anjali Thadani Ms. Neetu Jain Our community members have reported unsatisfactory experiences when attempting to access services in 311 in Kannada, Telugu, Gujarati, Sinhala, and Marathi – just to name a few languages. As such, stating access is available in 175 or 200 languages is incorrect. In other instances, getting a translator takes too much time and the community member feels frustrated and helpless. Also, getting the proper language translator is another problem. As an example – one of our clients who speaks Telegu was seeking assistance for Housing, but did not receive service in his language, rather he received the translator for Hindi. Unfortunately, he does not speak Hindi and he could not make understand his needs to the service provider. Finally, the call was disconnected, and our client did not receive the service. We can provide multiple examples that the South Asian Adults are facing difficulties accessing the 311 telephonic interpretation services.

Moving forward, we recommend the City Council take the following steps:

- 1. Ensure telephonic interpretation services are available in the major South Asian languages. There are more than 25 major different South Asian languages (e.g. Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Nepali etc.) are spoken in New York City as the South Asian populations are growing more rapidly.
- 2. Take necessary steps to reduce wait time for the caller to connect to an interpreter.

Sincerely,

Vasundhara D. Kalasapudi, M.D.

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New York City Council - Governmental Operations and Technology Committee
Oversight Hearing - Identification of languages to the 311 Customer Service
Center
January 17, 2019

Testimony of Michelle Bounkousohn, Community Organizer Mekong NYC

My name is Michelle Bounkousohn, and I am a Vietnamese community organizer for Mekong NYC. As part of my advocacy work for the Southeast Asian community in the Bronx, I often find myself bridging the gaps between the needs of the Southeast Asian community and the social services offered by the government. Interpreting services are few and far between in New York City, and often, community members are left waiting for Vietnamese or Khmer interpreters to become available, only to never hear back in time to get help for the social services they need. While community members often rely on their first-generation children to interpret for them, APIA organizations like Mekong also end up having to bridge that gap in order to ensure that our community members have access to affirming interpreting services, which empower them to have agency and humanity over the resources they need to thrive as refugees living in New York City. Please make the needs of our APIA community members a priority, and provide better access to high quality interpreting services for our community.



New York City Council - Governmental Operations and Technology Committee Oversight Hearing - Identification of languages to the 311 Customer Service Center January 17, 2019

Testimony of Rehan Mehmood, Director of Health Services South Asian Council for Social Services (SACSS)

My name is Rehan Mehmood and I am the Director of Health Services at SACSS – South Asian Council for Social Services. SACSS focuses on three key areas Healthcare access and benefits enrollment, Senior services, and Food security. SACSS also provides Youth leadership programs, Civic engagement, Free ESOL and computer classes. We thank the City Council for giving us this opportunity to testify at this extremely important Public Hearing.

"311" is a key helpline which has been linking residents of New York City to vital services and providing important information. Though we have seen tremendous improvement on how 311 is being operated, still there are issues which our clients have identified while calling 311. These are not finding an interpreter who speaks the language, longer wait time, unprofessional interpreters and rude behavior-specially with seniors. Most annoying for our clients is "hanging up the call as the caller fails to speak English".

Here, I would like to share few experiences: One of our clients who only spoke Hindi called 311 to complain about her building's elevator which was out of order for many days and the landlord failed to repair it. The client first got confused as she heard the parking rules, she hung up thinking that she had called NYPD. After a while she called again and waited for the parking rules announcement to end. She got connected to a 311 representative and started talking in Hindi. The person at the other end failed to understand her language and hung up. The client came to our office, she was assisted by one of our case managers to directly file a complaint with the NYC Dept of Buildings.

Another client who spoke Telugu and understood very little English found it hard to communicate with a 311 interpreter. The way he was translating the whole situation of the client being unable to pay his rent was totally different from what the client was trying to say. He only wanted someone to tell him if he can get housing assistance from any organization who spoke his language.

It is crucial that 311 be able to help those vulnerable clients who do not speak English and so come across forbidding challenges in accessing services. Thank you

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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Date:				
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THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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