

Resolution No. 745-17

AN EMERGENCY RESOLUTION

Supporting and urging Mayor Jackson's Administration to continue developing a Public Safety Department policy and training program to help police officers communicate and interact effectively with people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Council Members Conwell and Zone

WHEREAS, incidents of police violence toward people with disabilities and people who are deaf in particular are becoming all too common, according to experts; and

WHEREAS, the Ruderman Family Foundation released a report in March 2016, stating that "disability is the missing word in media coverage of police violence, and that disabled persons make up a third to half of all people killed by law enforcement officers"; and

WHEREAS, all law enforcement officers need to understand that people who are deaf or hard of hearing communicate in ways that are different from most officers' way of communicating; and

WHEREAS, individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may rely on American Sign Language, lip reading or, in some circumstances, communicating with a pen or paper; in some cases communication access is mandated by federal and state civil rights laws, and law enforcement officers have to be prepared to provide such access whenever possible, especially in life and death situations; and

WHEREAS, law enforcement officers too often make verbal orders for individuals to comply and act aggressively when those individuals do not comply, and deaf individuals often are unable to understand verbal commands of law enforcement officers, which has led to many physical altercations between law enforcement officers and deaf individuals over the years, with some resulting in death; and

WHEREAS, local human resource and police department leaders should strongly consider creative ways to address the needs and concerns from the police officer's perspective such as maintaining the peace and security and protecting themselves, while still respecting the rights of citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing; and

WHEREAS, Cleveland's Public Safety Department should train the police academy and police officers to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act Guide for Law Enforcement Officers, including "Communicating with People Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing" and "Practical Suggestions for Communicating Effectively"; and

WHEREAS, Cleveland police officers should be trained to use a variety of auxiliary aids to communicate effectively with deaf and/or hearing impaired persons, such as gestures, visual aids, a note pad and pen or pencil, a computer, an assistive listening device, a teletypewriter, and a qualified oral or language interpreter; and

WHEREAS, this Council recognizes the current methods used by Cleveland's Public Safety Department for handling calls from hearing impaired citizens, including 1) text telephones (TTY), 2) seven-digit TTY telephone number for citizens to reach a call taker station, 3) Ohio relay service that acts as an intermediary for TTY callers, 4) text to 9-1-1 scheduled to go live in July 2017 that will allow citizens to use standard cell phone text messaging to contact 9-1-1, and 5) iPads with live video American Sign Language Interpreters available through an app called Z5 in each District, and encourages further public safety policies and training to help police officers effectively communicate with people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

WHEREAS, this resolution constitutes an emergency measure for the immediate preservation of public peace, property, health or safety, now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CLEVELAND:

Section 1. That this Council supports and urges Mayor Jackson's Administration to continue developing a Public Safety Department policy and training program to help police officers communicate and interact effectively with people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Section 2. That the Clerk of Council is directed to transmit copies of this resolution to Mayor Frank G. Jackson, Tim Hennessy, Assistant Director of Public Safety, Debra Cavett, Commander, and Maria O'Neil Ruddock, Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Section 3. That this resolution is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and, provided it receives the affirmative vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to Council, it shall take effect and be in force immediately upon its adoption and approval by the Mayor; otherwise it shall take effect and be in force from and after the earliest period allowed by law.

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READ FIRST TIME on JUNE 5, 2017
and referred to DIRECTORS of Public Safety and Law;
COMMITTEES on Safety, Finance

REPORTS

CITY CLERK

READ SECOND TIME

CITY CLERK

READ THIRD TIME

PRESIDENT

CITY CLERK

APPROVED

MAYOR

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REPORT after second Reading

PASSAGE RECOMMENDED BY
COMMITTEE ON
SAFETY

FILED WITH COMMITTEE

PASSAGE RECOMMENDED BY
COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE

FILED WITH COMMITTEE

