

RESOLUTION NO. 444

ESTABLISHING A POLICY REQUIRING THE USE OF AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS AT ALL ALBANY COUNTY GOVERNMENT PRESS CONFERENCES HELD DURING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Introduced: 10/10/23

By Reinhardt, A. Joyce, Feeney, Clay, Cleary, Commisso, Lekakis, McLaughlin, Miller, Plotsky, Reidy, Ricard, Rosano, Simpson, Willingham and Domalewicz:

WHEREAS, Approximately 48 million Americans are deaf or hard-of-hearing, and there is a significant demand for improved access to emergency information for this population as they often struggle the most when it comes to preparing for and recovering from emergency situations and natural disasters, and

WHEREAS, Many in the deaf and hard-of-hearing populations have reported that closed-captioning is insufficient in disaster and emergency situations as closed-captioning is often inaccurate and does not capture the full range of information conveyed by government representatives, and

WHEREAS, The use of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters not only conveys information more accurately but also conveys nonverbal cues like mood and tone, and

WHEREAS, The Albany County Legislature finds that, to protect the health, safety, and general welfare of Albany County residents, ASL interpretation should be provided to ensure that all county residents have access to all available information during emergency situations and natural disasters, and

WHEREAS, Providing residents of Albany County who are part of the deaf and hard-of-hearing populations with more accurate and complete information from ASL interpreters will allow them to prepare for and respond to emergency situations and natural disasters more effectively and safely, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the County Executive is directed to seek qualified and certified ASL Interpreter services to interpret, at a minimum, all Albany County press conferences held regarding emergency situations and natural disasters, and, be it further

RESOLVED, The Legislature requests that such ASL Interpreters ensure that their face, body, hands, and arms are fully visible at all times during emergency broadcasts to ensure optimal communication, and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Clerk of the County Legislature is directed to forward certified copies of this resolution to the appropriate County Officials.

Referred to Public Safety Committee – 10/10/23

Favorable Recommendation Public Safety Committee – 10/26/23