

Language access... ¿qué es eso?

They say good things come to those who wait. But at Bread for the City, *great* things come when we *work* with our community to remedy injustice. Case in point: Allison Miles-Lee.

Allison is a bilingual attorney who focuses on family law and public benefits at Bread for the City. For the last seven years, she has been working to secure language access for all DC residents.

Language access... ¿qué es eso? Simply put, language access means that the city provides all government services in a language that its customers understand.

Under federal and DC laws, including the 2004 DC Language Access Act, DC government agencies and contractors are required to provide meaningful access to services for everyone, including limited and non-English speaking customers. This means providing oral interpretation in all languages and written translation of key documents in some languages.

This law is important to Bread for the City clients. It means that a French-speaking mother has the right to an interpreter during a special education meeting at her son's DC Public School and that an Amharic-speaker will have the right to an interpreter if charged with a crime in DC.



Allison Miles-Lee hard at work on language access for all!

Through the years, we have primarily worked with clients that have experienced language access problems at the DC Department of Human Services (DHS). We have observed a DHS employee try to communicate with a Spanish-speaker by "Googling" certain phrases in Spanish. Some of our clients have even pulled their children out of school to serve as interpreters at DHS meetings.

Alarmingly, our clients have also reported being shouted at in English by some government agency employees. One client reported that all he understood was "go away."

As a longtime member of the D.C. Language Access Coalition, Allison has been fighting hard for language access:

- In April 2011, she testified before the DC City Council that the Language Access Act was not sufficient to provide our clients with remedies if their language access rights were violated.
- In 2013, she testified again before the Council about how DHS continued to violate the Act.
- In 2015, Councilmember David Grosso introduced a bill to amend the Language Access Act. This bill would

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Holiday Helpings

In the blink of an eye, Holiday Helpings 2016 is in the books! More than 700 volunteers helped distribute nearly 8,500 turkeys with all the trimmings, and we raised over \$400,000 for our Food Program.

We are so thankful for the 100+ corporate and community partners that came together to sponsor Holiday Helpings and



organize company-wide drives. Your hard work surely paid off. Corporate partners large and small, non-profit groups, elementary schools, neighbors, and our amazing staff rallied together to spread the word of the good work we do at Bread for the City. Way to go!

A **huge thanks** to our top four 2016 Holiday Helpings fundraisers: Alston & Bird LLP, Perkins Coie LLP, Paul Taskier, and WilmerHale LLP. Your support and dedication mean the world to us.

Thank you all for standing with us to keep the Holiday Helpings tradition thriving.



Staff Spotlight: Dr. Monica Vohra

How long have you been with Bread for the City?

A little over two years; I celebrated my two year "Breadiversary" this past October.

Tell us about your job. What is your role here at BFC?

I provide primary care to DC residents at Bread for the City's medical clinic. Here, patients have one primary care doctor who knows everything about their health and well-being. This includes physical health, mental health, housing situation, and all other information that helps us to meet the needs of that one patient.

What do you like most about being a physician at Bread for the City?

I love that we use a medical home model. We provide comprehensive medical care and social services under one roof. I think social services are very important when assessing someone's overall health. The providers and staff here at Bread for the City are really special because we do things in a very purposeful manner and really make an effort to recognize that someone has other challenges in their life and how those challenges impact their health.

How do you think your work ties in to the overall mission of helping people and reducing poverty?

Health and poverty are inextricably linked. It's very important to make a strong push for access to healthcare in order to actually help someone to come out of poverty. If you're not in good health how can you care for your family, sustain a job or function in society? If we can make and keep our clients



Dr. Monica

healthy, then they can keep their jobs, be good at the things they enjoy doing and take care of their families.

What was your main motivation for joining the Bread for the City team?

I've always wanted to work in the community and I actually live in the same neighborhood as the NW Center. I love the fact that I get to take care of my neighbors. It's really great that when I step outside those doors it feels like I've been serving my community. They know where I work and that I'm here to support them. Also, in 2013, I did a rotation here during my residency for a month. I was impressed by the mission and that every day people make the effort to commit to that mission.

Life outside of work; What do you do with your free time?

I am very passionate about volunteering as a consulting physician in Bread for the City's asylum clinic.

A year ago, I started seeing survivors seeking asylum. I meet with them, help document their stories and conduct their physical exams to help support their applications for asylum.

Also, over a year ago, I started taking piano lessons. I always wanted to do it when I was little so I thought it would be great as something for the mind, body and soul. I love music and so I've been slowly learning. I like to be in the outdoors and I also enjoy hiking and travelling. That's pretty much it!

To support Dr. Monica's work, please donate to BFC's medical clinic at breadforthecity.org/givetoday.

**SAVE THE DATE**

SATURDAY, MAY 20, 2017
OMNI SHOREHAM HOTEL



Good Hope Gala

Tickets on sale now
\$300

Purchase at:
breadforthecity.org/good-hope-gala-tickets

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ablaine@breadforthecity.org

Become a Monthly Donor!



The best way to support our work is through a monetary contribution.

Become a monthly donor today and help us sustain our programs year-round at
BreadfortheCity.org/givemonthly.

Just want to make a one-time gift? Give today at **Donate.BreadfortheCity.org**.

Here are some of our most needed items:

- ✓ Diapers
- ✓ Children's books, especially in Spanish
- ✓ Cleaning supplies/ laundry detergent
- ✓ Gift cards for grocery stores and pharmacies
- ✓ Plus-sized clothing for men and women
- ✓ SmarTrip cards
- ✓ Toiletries and other household items

LANGUAGE ACCESS *Continues:*

allow DC government agencies to be fined if they fail to provide language access, with half of the fine going to the complainant and the other half to improve language access in the city.

- Throughout 2016, the Language Access Coalition worked to edit the bill and get other Councilmembers on board.



DC Councilmembers face a packed house of residents concerned about language access.

formal structure to ensure that customers are provided with interpretation at every point of contact with the agency. If a customer is not provided with language access, they will be able to contact a designated Ombudsman at each service center who will immediately come out to assist the customer before they leave the building. Additionally, DHS will establish a Language Access Customer Advisory Group to monitor their compliance with the settlement and advise DHS on language access practices.

On January 24, 2017, the bill was re-introduced by Councilmember Grosso along with six other Councilmembers!

Seeking a new way to ensure that the law is enforced, in October 2015, the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, the law firm Hogan Lovells, and Bread for the City (of counsel) filed a lawsuit in DC Superior Court against the Department of Human Services.

The plaintiffs were Ms. Nolasco, who was denied prenatal care after her health insurance was wrongly cancelled, and Ms. Amaya, whose food stamps were erroneously recertified at a much lower level than her family should have received. In both cases, the women had requested an interpreter and in both cases, they had been denied this service. In both cases, they and their families suffered.

The lawsuit was settled in December 2016. Under the settlement agreement, DHS agreed to implement a new

About this outcome Allison says,

“Bread for the City remains hopeful that this successful litigation will lead to real change and will prevent the cycle of unnecessary termination and denial of benefits that impacts so many of our limited and non-English proficient community members. We look forward to working with the plaintiffs, OHR, the Washington Lawyers' Committee, and Hogan Lovells to continue this fight.”

Bread for the City believes that those among us who need help the most should receive it regardless of language barriers. Our city needs a budget for language access and increased staff training at agencies across the District. **Tell your Councilmember that you support language access for all!** And support Bread for the City's Language Access work by contributing at breadforthe.city.org/givetoday.

Looking for other ways to get involved?

Volunteer with us!

Contact **volunteer@breadforthe.city.org** to make a difference in the community.



Bread for the City 2016 Year in Review

It was another amazing year at Bread for the City! With donors, volunteers, and staff working together, we were able to meet the immediate needs of those we serve, while also working on a systemic level to make DC a more just and equitable city. Some highlights:



We started distributing five days of groceries instead of three to help our clients stretch their food budgets even farther.

Our fearless leader Dr. Randi Abramson celebrated a quarter century of service as our Chief Medical Officer!



Our Housing Access Program launched monthly housing clinics in Spanish.



We welcomed in Jasmine, our 2nd behavioral health specialist who will help Bread for the City provide care and support for 500 more DC residents.



Bread for the City was honored to host Civil Rights icon Congressman John Lewis and author Andrew Aydin for a book signing of "March III", the third in their series of graphic novels.

Our City Orchard engaged 1,800 volunteers in harvesting 17,240 lbs of fresh fruits and veggies for 8,401 servings of food.



On October 1st, Bread for the City clients, community members, and allies rallied outside DC General and DC Jail to demand that DC Mayor Muriel Bowser and the District's City Council invest more in housing than they do in police and prisons.



And of course, this amazing work was accomplished in addition to the daily work of Bread for the City: bringing food, clothing, medical, legal, and comprehensive social services to more than 34,000 DC residents living with low incomes each year.

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