

MBC Language Accessibility Hearing Zoom Recording

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Maria Rodriguez, Adrian Madaro, Mercy Robinson, Caroline Adamson, Adam Bass (Lynn Daily Item), Stephanie Cooper, Donald Bossi, Alex DeFronzo, Daniel West Cohen, Maya Smith, Ghiz Benzerjeb, Jessica Giannino, Jason McCann, Bruce Berman, Nicole McClain, Patricia Salic, Chris Mancini, Barbara Bishop, Brendan Crighton, Jacqueline Chavez, Julia Mejia, Nina Liang

-
- C** Chris Mancini 00:00
Perfect. So we'll...and where we are, it is 10 o'clock. So we will be recording the meeting today.
 - B** Bruce Berman 00:11
Very nice turnout, Chris.
 - C** Chris Mancini 00:15
Thanks, team. Nice work, everyone. And thank you all for showing up. All the commissioners, I know, there's so much going on these days. And we really appreciate you making time for this. This is a really important hearing for all of us. And so we're really looking forward to it.
 - C** Chris Mancini 00:40
This is the moment I miss the in-person, where we can all, like, be in the room together chatting, you know, in little groups. So you want to say something, but it's like, everyone's listening here, the fishbowl.
 - A** Adam Bass (Lynn Daily Item) 00:55
Hopefully, it will get back to that someday.

B Bruce Berman 01:01
There's an expression that says, "From your mouth to God's ears."

B Bruce Berman 01:18
You know, one of the best parts about this hearing is that Chris and I got to do road trips this weekend. And look at signs from Nantasket and Nahant. And that means we got to visit all the beaches. And it was very instructive. And also, frankly, a lot of fun to be out and about. Commissioner Cooper, so happy to see you here today.

S Stephanie Cooper 01:50
Yeah, I don't know exactly which days you were doing the visits, but on certain ones you could have been quite brave considering the weather that we had.

B Bruce Berman 01:58
I have to say that you have to make this decision sometimes about whether to walk in the frozen tire tracks or on the crusty snow. Right? It's not. But on the other hand, they're they're beautiful assets.

S Stephanie Cooper 02:10
Yeah, absolutely.

C Chris Mancini 02:12
We did back to back days. So we had the really sunny day. And then we had the overcast day. And I almost bit it about four times trying to get photos while walking over the frozen tundra.

B Bruce Berman 02:25
We'd like to have a sign that says, Warning: Slippery When Icy.

C Chris Mancini 02:30
I needed that apparently.

C - - - - -

B Bruce Berman 02:35

I'm also pretty impressed at the number of people that are out and about either just having a cup of coffee or going for a walk or using you know, the park or just frankly, sitting in their car on a very cold day. Remind me to turn off my cell phone.

C Chris Mancini 02:53

So we're gonna give this about one more minute and then we're gonna start the hearing with some instructions from Maria and our language interpreters.

C Chris Mancini 03:05

Ted Bazi, nice to see you. Thanks for joining us. Commissioner Madaro, nice to see you. Thanks for being here.

C Chris Mancini 03:30

For those just joining, we're just asking if everyone could just introduce yourself with your with your with your affiliation in the chat.

C Chris Mancini 04:05

All right, so good to see everybody. This is terrific. All right, I'm gonna get us started here with some of our instructions. Thank you all for being here. My name is Chris Mancini, I'm the executive director of Save the Harbor/Save the Bay. I know almost everybody, I think, who's here today. A couple new faces. Thank you so much to our commissioners from the Metropolitan Beaches Commission for being here. Before I go into any more detail on acknowledgments and thank yous, I do want to turn it over to Maria Rodriguez from our team, who's going to start us with a couple instructions for the hearing today. And just you know, basic rules of the road that we're all familiar with, I think, for Zoom, as well as some specifics about the language interpretation.

M Maria Rodriguez 05:09

Hi everyone, my name is Maria Rodriguez. I am the environmental policy assistant here at Save the Harbor/Save the Bay. I'm going to go ahead and give you some instructions for navigating the different language channels. Um, so if you are an English speaker, you can navigate to the language interpretation tab that should be at the bottom of your screen. And you can select the English channel.

M Maria Rodriguez 05:35

[Spanish].

- M** Maria Rodriguez 05:44
And I'm not sure how to speak all the other languages, but, you can read it off the screen, please let me know if everyone can see what I'm sharing right now. Can everyone see it?
- B** Bruce Berman 05:54
We can.
- M** Maria Rodriguez 05:55
Ok, perfect. Yeah, so please go ahead and navigate to the language channel of your choice. If you need any help, you can let me know.
- M** Maria Rodriguez 06:18
Are we doing that now, Chris?
- C** Chris Mancini 06:20
Yeah, so we do want to encourage English speakers to be in the English room. And this is so if we have any interpretation from one of the other languages into English that will enable you to hear those testimonies. And if there is any issue with the audio, you can toggle back and forth. But please make sure to go to that English room either as default or when there is interpretive testimony.
- M** Maria Rodriguez 06:50
Okay, perfect. So are we all going to go ahead and join that room now? Okay, all right. And then if you speak any other language, feel free to join the language of your choice.
- B** Bruce Berman 07:02
It's good to see that Chairman Craig has also been able to join us.
- C** Chris Mancini 07:14
So Maria, will you continue with?
- M** Maria Rodriguez 07:18

Yeah, so as a reminder, all participants have been muted upon entry. If you would like to mute or unmute, you can use the icons at the bottom of your screen. And if you need any help with that, feel free to message me. And if you would like to speak, or if you have any comments, you can use the raise hand function to speak or in the chat, and I'll give you some ability to speak. And just so you know, the chat will be monitored by our staff. So if you have any questions, again, you can put them on there. The agenda should be available on the chat, please let me know if you would like me to share that again with you, I'll be sharing it as more people join the meeting. As a reminder, we have live transcriptions, so that should be enabled. Now. If you have any trouble seeing that, again, you can say it in the chat or raise your hand. And also, if you need a moment, take the moment to step back. We understand some things may be overwhelming, so you can just turn off your Zoom. Yeah. Thank you, everyone, for joining us.

C

Chris Mancini 08:29

Thank you, Maria. And we have a couple more folks joining us if you do have a chance to just drop your name and affiliation into the chat. So we have a record of that, that'd be great to see.

C

Chris Mancini 08:40

And now we will get started. Again, I'm Chris Mancini, I'm the executive director of Save the Harbor/Save the Bay. Thank you all so much for joining us today. Thank you to our commissioners, all the members of the public and the representatives of the departments and agencies that we've had the pleasure of speaking with over the past couple of weeks leading up to this hearing. This is the third in a recent series of hearings, the Metropolitan Beaches Commission meets annually to look at the the issues and focuses on the Metropolitan beaches that are facing our communities. And over the past year, as most of you and many of you know, we've been bringing a focus to equity and accessibility on the nine communities' metropolitan beaches. And so this hearing today is specifically on language accessibility, which came up in our early hearings as a key issue, that if we can't have inclusivity and equitability on our beaches that, just to paraphrase and plagiarize a great quote from our last hearing, that folks will become spectators on these beaches when they should be involved, active participants.

C

Chris Mancini 09:56

So, I just want to thank all of you for being here, specifically our commissioners, Commissioner Stephanie Cooper from DCR. And of course, the representatives who are here from the State Police, the environment Department of Boston, Boston Water and Sewer Commission, the US EPA. And I know some other folks will be joining us as we go. I will also like to say, we've had some terrific conversations with all of the agencies, even folks who are joining us later today, very productive conversations with DPH and the Department of Marine Fisheries, this is a really important issue to everybody and we're all working together on this knowing that it's a challenge, and that we have a lot of steps to go. So, Save the Harbor is here as a resource, we're here to help. We're all, I think, working towards the same goals here. So, I know Senator and Co-Chair Crighton, we have you only for a brief part of today. I know you have some other obligations. So I'd love to open it to you if you have any comments today to welcome folks.

B**Brendan Crighton 11:11**

Thank you, Chris. Yeah, I'll be brief. But I do apologize in advance. I'm coming from a funeral service and I have to head to the statehouse for a Senate caucus. So I apologize, I didn't want to miss this. But we will have staff on the call.

B**Brendan Crighton 11:24**

Thank you so much to Save the Harbor/Save the Bay, all the commissioners that have been involved throughout this to identify this issue and to raise this level of importance about having a public hearing with so many great folks here to testify from the public to exchange your ideas. And I will be brief. Our role here today as commissioners is to listen, to ask questions, but to really take these, ideas, recommendations and issues in and to put them into action once we have completed the hearing and looking into it.

B**Brendan Crighton 11:55**

Just a quick thought, you know, my district we have over 40 languages spoken in our public school. So, you know, in government, we should always put ourselves in the shoes of our constituents to think about how does a family go and fully enjoy the beach, fully have access to the beach, if they're unable to, to read their signs or to know what's available to them for programming? And it's a big challenge, but I know the folks that we have here testifying on behalf of the administration and other agencies are committed to helping us to meet that challenge, and to make some really big changes so that our beaches are fully accessible everyone. So Chris, thank you again, to you, to Bruce, Save the Harbor, and to all of our commissioners for digging in and doing the work here.

C**Chris Mancini 12:43**

Terrific. Thanks so much, Senator, before the senator leaves, I know I'm going to introduce our other co chair. But I'd like to ask everyone to just take a moment look into your camera, we're going to grab a photo of the hearing here. So Caroline, just give me a thumbs up once you've grabbed a terrific photo of all these smiling faces. Or serious faces depending on your preferred look. Alright, great. And now to our co chair, Representative Madaro would you like to say hello,

A**Adrian Madaro 13:16**

Certainly. Thank you, Chris, and thank you to my wonderful co chair Senator Crighton. Good morning everyone. It's great to be with you all today for this important conversation on language barriers at our region's beaches. I'm incredibly grateful to you, Chris, Bruce Berman, all the staff and board members of Save the Harbor/Save the Bay. You really do a remarkable job of making sure our beaches are the best public resources they can be. Also, grateful to my colleagues on the Metropolitan Beaches Commission for their committed efforts to improve our public spaces. Also, I want to extend gratitude to our other partners in government who will be testifying at today's hearing who have helped inform today's agenda. They include members of

DCR, the Department of Public Health, specifically the Bureau of Environmental Health, the Division of Marine Fisheries, the Massachusetts State Police, DEP, the Mass Water Resources Authority and the Boston Planning and Development Agency.

A

Adrian Madaro 14:09

Over the last few months, we've discussed ways to make our beaches as welcoming, accessible and inclusive as possible for all residents to enjoy. To that end, we must guarantee that everyone can enjoy them regardless of the language they speak. In my district of East Boston, I'm blessed to represent an incredibly vibrant community and immigrant community and our diversity is our point of pride. I'm fortunate to represent so many people of different ethnic backgrounds and perspectives. Half of our community is Latinx, about 50% of our community is foreign-born, and just as many residents are non-native English speakers. Yet, at Constitution Beach--East Boston's only public beach and only point of access to the water which surrounds our community--signage is only in English. These language barriers are quite concerning. In East Boston, language justice and language access are not merely aspirations, they're absolute necessities to ensure the safety, well-being and success of all of our neighbors. Language Access on our beaches entails providing critical safety information about water quality, weather conditions, upcoming activities and general beach safety knowledge. Empowering residents with the ability to make informed decisions while at our beaches helps ensure overall public safety and enjoyment. This starts with ensuring that signage at our beaches is multilingual, giving all the ability to read and understand the important information the signs share. There's a lot of work to make sure our public spaces, including our public beaches within the Commonwealth, reflect that all belong and all deserve access. Eliminating language barriers and ensuring language access at our beaches would be one major step in the right direction.

A

Adrian Madaro 15:48

I look forward to hearing from all of you today, including my neighbors in East Boston, Alex DeFronzo, the Executive Director of the Piers Park Sailing Center; Juana Sanchez, the site manager at Eastie Farm; and Chris Markey, the East Boston representative on the NBC and a local environmental justice activist. Finally, I look forward to working with DCR and all of our partners and stakeholders to make our beaches as equitable and accessible as possible for everybody. Thank you.

C

Chris Mancini 16:16

Thank you so much, Commissioner and Co-Chair. Thanks for being here. And just as a reminder to folks, if you're not in the English language channel, make sure to be there, the audio will be much cleaner there for English speakers.

C

Chris Mancini 16:36

I did miss someone before, I do want to thank Ryan McGowan Conran from DPH, for being here as well. Thanks for joining us.

C Chris Mancini 16:44
So we are going to work through our agenda today, Maria is going to share the agenda if you don't have it. It's on the chat. And Maria, if you don't mind putting it up on the screen just for a brief moment so folks can see that. We have two presentations for you on language accessibility. And then of course, we'll have a chance for remarks from our other department commissioners. And then questions and comments from our our beaches commissioners, before we move into the public testimony section of our meeting. So thank you, there it is. With that said, we are going to turn it over to Caroline Adamson and Bruce Berman from Save the Harbor for your presentation. Thank you.

M Maria Rodriguez 17:30
Before we start, I would like to ask all of our speakers if they could speak a little bit slower so that the interpreters can do it at a timely manner. So yeah, thank you so much, everyone.

C Chris Mancini 17:42
Thanks for that reminder, Maria.

C Caroline Adamson 17:49
Bruce, I'll go ahead and share my screen so we can get started.

B Bruce Berman 17:52
Thanks, everybody. I want you to know that our presentation will now take 12 minutes instead of 10 because I'm we're going to speak more slowly.

B Bruce Berman 18:01
Can everybody see our screen? I assume they can. Alright, first, I want to say thanks to the commissioners, to everybody who's here and to the staff and the team and Chris from Save the Harbor/Save the Bay and particularly to Maria, for working so hard to make this and all of our other hearings, a success. We were asked to take a hard look at current and best practices for multilingual signage and websites in this space.

B Bruce Berman 18:39
So, you know, the reason that this is our first slide is to just sort of say what Adrian has acknowledged, that almost 25% of Massachusetts residents speak a language other than English in their home.

M Maya Smith 18:56
There seems to be an issue with the audio. I'm not sure if everyone else is hearing that as well. Is everyone muted, other than the speaker?

B Bruce Berman 19:04
Is that better? I've stopped my video and that helps I think.

B Bruce Berman 19:13
So, this is again, the same point that Representative Madaro made so eloquently just a few minutes ago, 25% of the Commonwealth speak a language other than English in their home. The largest by far is Spanish, followed by Mandarin or Cantonese, and there are many other languages as well. Next for me. And as Chris said, and also as the chairs have said, we've had very productive...

M Maria Rodriguez 19:44
We can't hear you.

B Bruce Berman 19:46
Yeah, it's not, I don't think it's on my end.

M Maria Rodriguez 19:53
Do you hear it when I talk or is it just Bruce's audio?

M Maya Smith 19:58
No, I'm not having that problem when you speak Maria, I was just hearing it when Bruce was speaking.

B Bruce Berman 20:05
Other people seem to be having having no problem. So we'll we'll go forward.

P Patricia Salic 20:10
I can't hear either, Bruce. I'm sorry.

B

Bruce Berman 20:12

Yep. I'm seeing audio's fine from a lot of people and audio's not from others on the screen.

B

Bruce Berman 20:18

So, we've had great conversations about the importance of this effort. And I want to thank the same folks, DCR, DPH, DMF, MWRA, the Mass State Police and the Mass Environmental Police who've acknowledged how important this is to all of us. Next for me.

B

Bruce Berman 20:43

We took the time to do a comprehensive survey of current signage at the metropolitan region's public beaches, during a very icy weekend. It won't surprise folks to know that many signs need to be repaired or replaced. Next, the messaging sometimes even on the same beach can be confusing and inconsistent. And I think that we can do better. It's important to know that you shouldn't fly a drone at Logan Airport. It might be more important than the dogs and the grilling sign, but there's no way to know that. And I may be the only person in the room, besides Commissioner Meschino, that says that a master digger is a clam digger that's licensed for Boston Harbor.

B

Bruce Berman 21:40

I did just realize that the audio problem seems to be in the English language channel. So if you're in the English language channel, and you're having a problem with it, you could pop back out to the main channel. Alright, next please.

B

Bruce Berman 21:55

We looked at 250 signs, and just four of them were in languages other than English. In Winthrop and at Nahant, we found copies in English and Spanish of the warning flags. Though, there are no flags currently being displayed. We found one sign which at first I thought banned the use of beach chairs as space savers or on the beach, but actually turns out to mean that the beach is not guarded. And finally, we saw at the pickle barrel, which is a really underutilized state resource that we have plans for at Carson Beach, the only sign on it is in English and Spanish, and it says do not enter. Next.

B

Bruce Berman 22:50

Information about beach water quality, including current beach postings. The permanent signage is in English only, which puts the public's health at risk and the posting and flagging information is also in English only during the posting and flagging season. Something which we're working with our partners at DPH to address and with DCR to address. There are other

fairly serious public safety concerns. You know, at Blacks Creek in Quincy, it's not safe to swim, there's an undertow and you could be sucked in and either washed into or out of under the bridge. And it's really dangerous. And this warning sign is in English only. And it's just, you know, a beach that's very popular with people that speak a lot of languages, we need to find a way to do better. It would also be no nice to know what that you're going to get toed or that you'll be arrested or prosecuted in a language that you speak. Although it is pretty clear that there's no smoking on the beaches. The International signs just don't...they don't do what they did in the 70s when they were the state of the art.

B

Bruce Berman 24:11

There are a lot of different approaches that people are working on, implementing and experimenting with. In Burlington, which we call the People's Republic of Burlington, Vermont, they are using one design for multilingual signage across the city. For fishing regulations, there are simple signs available, at least in two languages and in many cases in other languages -- although we probably shouldn't be using a freshwater pike, we'll probably use a striped bass. And the QR function is already being used to link to web resources for water quality, which is really important because these beaches are particularly important for people who might not have a good grasp of fairly sophisticated English concepts about water quality. Let's go to the next.

B

Bruce Berman 25:13

So if you want, you can scan it. And we're proud to say if you have your cell phone, I'm going to give you a second to do it. But we're already using QR codes in some places. SmileMass, who helps put wheelchairs and mobi mats on the beaches has a QR code to their website. DCR's already implemented this through their Yodel Mobile pass system and Save the Harbor/Save the Bay as well. Let's go to the next one.

B

Bruce Berman 25:48

So we're clear on this, every agency that we spoke with has acknowledged that efforts are underway, that it's important to them, that it will help their customers, if you will, but it will also help them do their jobs. Next. So quick run through, and we're not pointing fingers, because, you know, I do want to say that the city of Boston, the Baker administration, and the communities are in the process of trying to address this issue. Google Translate is a place to start, boy is it imperfect. Okay, but it's really getting better. So if you look for DCR site, they do use Google Translate. But all the background documents, spreadsheets, and PDFs, they're often and almost always only available in English. Next, on saltwater fishing regulations, man, DMF has a great site, which has Google Translate on it. But they have so many terrific resources. I mean, really great stuff that you'd want to keep and put on your refrigerator, that are only offered in English right now. And we do think that maybe if we spent less on printing, and more on translation, that we might be able to be more efficient, and address this issue. And they've indicated to us that, you know, they're DCR beaches, but they'd like people to know what the rules were. And they're going to work with us to find a way to get that out. And this is, I think, the most troubling, but but also, I think one that we'll be able to resolve, the DPH website, overall uses Google Translate. But the Bureau of environmental health, beach water

quality is available in English only. And it frankly needs to be updated. And I expect it to be updated fairly soon. Interestingly, it was built in the early 2000s and is maintained every day. But none of the FAQs are available in any language other than English. And so people don't even understand why they'd want to go there. And we've spoken to DPH, and they're already working on it. Next. So I'm gonna, if you don't mind, turn this over to Caroline, who's done a fairly deep dive to talk a little bit about best practices and what's out there.

C Caroline Adamson 28:13

Thanks, Bruce. Yeah, after checking out the current practices, I just wanted to take everybody through a couple best practices that we're seeing other states and communities implement to address this same issue. First, we have the QR code, which we talked about a little bit already, it's an incredibly easy thing to put on physical signage, to link people to the multilingual resources they need. Again, we're already seeing this on a couple of the DCR signs and we would love to see it used for translation purposes as well. Additionally, social media can be a really great way to meaningfully and directly connect with community members. We see the city of New York doing this with beach advisories on their Twitter account. They include a link to multilingual and American Sign Language information as well through that. And finally, but potentially most notably, Connecticut has this going digital movement that has allowed them to create resources available in multiple languages through the reduction of print copies. So together, we think that these can make some great additions to our influence.

B Bruce Berman 29:15

Next for us, again, just to acknowledge, you know, this is a work in progress. As Chris has often observed, a marathon, not a sprint, which I might point out are two things I'll never be doing again. And I also have to say that in many cases, physical signage is expensive, but you just don't want people leaping into the water where there's an undertow because they forgot to check their cell phone. Last, I think. Thanks. And if you want to have some fun, scan that QR code, leave it up for a second. Caroline and I'll be glad to take any questions you have otherwise I believe we're going to hear from... who are we gonna hear from, Maria, next?

M Maria Rodriguez 30:02

So next we will have a presentation from Daniel West Cohen, the city growth manager at Soofa Digital, and he will be presenting on multilingual communication in digital signage.

D Daniel West Cohen 30:16

Thanks so much. Can I share my screen now?

D Daniel West Cohen 30:22

Okay, Can everyone see?

D

Daniel West Cohen 30:41

It's a pleasure to meet you. I'm Daniel West Cohen. I'm the city growth manager for the East Coast of Soofa. First, I'd like to thank Chris, Maria, Caroline and Bruce from Save the Harbor/Save the Bay for having me, and everyone at the Metropolitan Beaches Commission for all the important work that you do. We're really excited to be here and I'm honored to represent Soofa for this important project. Just a little bit about us as a company, we're a proudly woman-founded, women-led company. We were founded out of MIT's Media Lab. And I took this this meeting because I want to present here because information equity and multilingual communication, particularly in digital signage is something that's really important to us across the board. I'm not sure if you've seen our signs in the Boston area, but what we try to do is we try to bring Community News, business directories, social media, public service announcements, transit information, events, opinion polls, and a host of other things into the public space so that everyone has access to it, regardless of whether they have a cell phone or whether they have internet, regardless of what language they speak, because obviously, we might have a cell phone or we might have the internet, but we might not know what's going on in our neighborhood in our communities. And that's where we kind of come in. So we're a for-profit company, but we're also for-impact company. And that's why I'm here today much more for the for-impact part because this mission is just so important.

D

Daniel West Cohen 32:10

Right here, if you can see my screen, these are signs in Revere. I'm really glad that Bruce and Caroline brought up QR codes, because that's one of the main ways that we believe that you can get vital community information out to the public. You can give them information in their language, they can scan the QR code, and they can learn more about it. So they were spot on with that recommendation. There's really been two places in the Boston area where we have, you know, really forwarded or tried to forward at least multilingual communication. The first place is in Revere, and we're right by the beach there. And the second place is in my neighborhood in Brookline. In Revere, we begin to work with them, particularly, to get out multilingual communication to their Spanish, Arabic and Portuguese speaking communities during the pandemic. We sat down with them, we said, hey, what are your needs? What are the needs of your constituency and your populace? How can we work together to create something that gets vital community information out, particularly during the pandemic, to where masks, to say inside, to social distance, for all these things. So we put down a bunch of signs in Revere. And right here, you can see one of our first times where we put a custom vinyl on the back in both English and Spanish to make sure that both the English speakers and the Spanish speakers knew what the COVID regulations were and not to take for granted the fact that everyone speaks English, because we know that Boston's such a multilingual area, they don't.

D

Daniel West Cohen 33:42

So, just a little bit about what we try to do is that we try to push out urgent PSAs, we try to push out health guidelines to residents and visitors. And we really try to connect with those outside traditional digital channels, it goes back to what I was saying before, not everyone has access to the internet, not everybody has access to a cellphone and and if they do, maybe they're not using it to necessarily know what's going on in their community. So it's just so important to have some sort of signage, some sort of digital signage out there in multiple

languages, where people are gonna see it, and people are gonna interact with it. So that includes more multilingual communities, but that also includes the homeless and what we call the digitally unbanked, we want to have information equity on all of our streets in the Boston area. And the final thing that we think is very important, particularly on this side, is that we try to provide municipalities with real time data with a pedestrian sensor. And basically what that is, is it's not a big brother, we're not Facebook, we're not trying to monitor privacy data, but we are trying to show who's where and when, so they can get vital information about their communities, and they can inform the local populace about what's going on. So pedestrian data tracking is also vital when you're dealing with multilingual communications on digital signage.

D

Daniel West Cohen 35:00

Going forward, I just want to talk a little bit about the best practices and what we've seen. Obviously, this is a new field where everyone's still learning on it. But one of the things that's extremely important when communicating with communities who speak different languages, is pictures and infographics. This is actually a infographic that we put out in the Boston area on one of our signs during the pandemic, obviously, it's in Vietnamese, I'm sure there's some Vietnamese speakers here. But you don't even need to know Vietnamese to see what the importance of this messaging is because there's pictures and there's infographics. So doing that's extremely important. Um, the other thing that's important is ease of use, and being able to quickly update the sign, obviously, information is constantly changing, if you have a digital sign, you can update it at the touch of a button. Whereas, if you have a paper sign or you have a static metal sign, obviously you need to go in there by hand and update it. And when community information is changing, when information at the beaches is changing, you want to be able to just go in there and update it very quickly. And that's kind of the the benefits of digital signage for multilingual communication.

D

Daniel West Cohen 36:16

Just to talk a little bit about what we've done in Revere and Brookline a little bit more. Obviously, in Revere, as I mentioned, we really work with them to share COVID guidelines in English, Spanish and Portuguese. In Revere, we also work with them to support local community shelters, to support food pantries, to support other community assets in multiple languages. And I think these were things that were always there, obviously, but people didn't know that they were necessarily there. And by providing the information in their languages, they were able to access that and frequented much more than they had been before. So we're really, really proud of that. In Brookline, part of our use case was that we were trying to increase diversity in public discourse. So on our signs, if you can see my mouse here, we were promoting local events and open houses, and municipal gatherings in English and Spanish. And as Bruce and Caroline so accurately stated, having a QR code is essential, because people can read the information, but then they want to learn more about it. So if they have a cell phone, they can go in and they can, you know, expand on that information. Just a little quote about our partnership with Revere, Revere Mayor Brian Arrigo says "Soofa signs give us another opportunity to reach people right in their own neighborhoods, provide them with what they need to know in real time, and allow them to interact with their city and each other in a new and innovative way." And that's really our mission, we want to give that vital community information to the people that they need. And particularly here at beaches, whether you use a Soofa sign or another signage provider, it almost doesn't matter. But the people need to be

able to access that information in their languages. So they're not just bystanders, but they're active participants, as Chris said, and whether you use us or you don't use Soofa, it's just so important. And that's what we're all trying to achieve and if we work together we can come up with solutions that are innovative and new and reach those goals. So I just want to thank you so much. If you have any questions, here is my number. Feel free to call me here's my email address, feel free to email me. As I mentioned, we're a for impact company, so thank you so much for having us.

M Maria Rodriguez 38:32

Thank you so much for that wonderful presentation, Daniel. Next, we will hear from Commissioner Stephanie Cooper from the DCR.

S Stephanie Cooper 38:41

Good morning, first an audio test. Do I sound okay? Yeah, okay. Good.

S Stephanie Cooper 38:47

Well, good morning. Good morning to Chair Crighton and Chair Madaro and all members of the Metropolitan Beaches Commission. To everyone who is gathered here today, I want to thank Chris and Bruce and the whole team at Save the Harbor/Save the Bay for everything you do and for all the work you've done to organize today's discussion, which I've already learned a lot from so far.

S Stephanie Cooper 39:13

So again, my name is Stephanie Cooper, I'm the Acting Commissioner of DCR. It's my pleasure to be here with you today. We're going to talk about our plans, what we have in place and the work in progress and improvements we want to make, so that the public has information accessible about rules and regulations, outreach, signage and the like in different languages, right, so that people can find the information that they need to fully enjoy the beach experience in the languages that they speak. And Bruce set a really good context for the discussion today, which is great. So I'm speaking to you today at a time when you know, peak visitation at the beaches seems far away, although as we were talking about earlier, we know that these places are enjoyed by so many year round, no matter what the weather. But we are thinking about the summer recreation season and Susan and her team are working really hard to get ready for that. So we want to make sure that we have safe, accessible waterfronts for children and families, for everyone who enjoys our waterfront, but particularly for people in environmental justice communities. And we know that these places are the incredible escapes for all of us. But it is, as we've said before, where you can hop on the blue line or you know, get on your bike and take the bus and be at a beautiful waterfront staring at the ocean on a really hot day, and we're having more of them. So it's really important that we have these places that are ready and inviting for people to come cool off. So yes, we focus on making our spaces accessible and safe. So of course, that means, you know, having clearly marked swimming areas with ropes and buoys, lifeguards on duty, and water quality testing, right, those are that's sort of the

baseline. But we also need to have signage and information that provides people with what are the rules and regulations, what are the amenities, what do I need to know, to enjoy the beach and be safe? So Bruce's presentation highlighted, I would say, some of where we're headed and some of the progress that we still need to make. So last year, we did create some new signage that Bruce showed an example of at Kings Beach, but we'll be deploying it across our system, including, of course, to all the Metropolitan beaches. And so that will provide important safety information in different languages. And so it's information like if it's an unguarded waterfront, you need to know that it's not a place that you have a lifeguard there who's ready to assist, as needed. And in when there's no swimming allowed, that's really important. That's the basic safety information, sometimes what we need to convey to people is this is not a safe place for you to go in the water.

S

Stephanie Cooper 43:28

We're also looking at, you know, sticking with the theme of the QR codes, you know, having something that can be displayed on all of our water quality related signage that would give access to a page with all the information about our parks, rules, and regulations in different languages. Now, we need to make that manageable because there's a lot of information but we would pick out the most relevant and highlight that for people. And I wanted to just touch quickly on, as I said, we're in the throes of getting ready for the summer season and of course, recruitment of lifeguards is a key part of that. And it's something I talk about everywhere I go these days and I know it's important to this group, so having enough trained and qualified lifeguards, and importantly hiring people from the communities we serve and hiring people who can communicate with all of our visitors and so we do you know partner with community groups who help us recruit lifeguards and then train them and we hire them. We reimburse those groups for the associated costs.

S

Stephanie Cooper 44:46

I did have to highlight you know our partnership has saved the harbor Save the Bay too because it's programming is so important too and Save the Harbor/Save the Bay does such a great job. And last year we provided \$190,000 in funding which was awarded to 67 organizations for all different types of programming, which you know, is so important and enhances the experience. I did also want to highlight a major initiative of the administration, which is expanding free swimming lessons. And so that's something that we provided grants to many community partners last year under what we call the swim initiative, Safe Water Initiative, Massachusetts, and that's to offer beginners swimming lessons. Everybody has the right to learn how to swim. And that's something that we're going to be greatly expanding this year, we've already provided over \$300,000 in grants, and the governor's budget proposes more funding. So I think that's just related in the sense that, you know, everybody has the right to learn how to swim. And if you, you know, we should be particularly serving people in the communities where our, where our beaches are, right, and we should be meeting them where they are, teaching them how to swim, inviting them to the beaches, and when they get there providing information in a format in the language that they can then understand, that answers the questions that they have, and really helps them have the best possible experience that they can have. And we're doing all of this in partnership with all of you and with all of the different agencies who are here today. So with that, I will conclude my remarks and I'm happy to answer questions.

B**Bruce Berman 46:24**

Thank you, Commissioner. This is Bruce Berman, I hope that you can hear my audio. We very much appreciate your coming here today. I just want to say one quick thing about how important it is for us to work together. The water quality information that DPH has, which is you know, as current as it can be, is available on their website. Getting it to beach managers to use for flagging and also making sure that the methodology that we use is one that works -- and doesn't leave us with five days in a row with a red flag on a beach over the Fourth of July weekend in East Boston, when we know the waters clean -- we think that we can use the web to simplify that. There may also be, as we've discussed with DCR in the past, and I believe they agree and MWRA agrees and others agree, and I think DPH is coming along, there may be efficiencies that we can put in by by by integrating. So we've asked Senator Crighton and rep Madaro to convene a little get together to talk about this, about ways that we can make some differences this year. I know that many of the commissioners have expressed concerns about the flagging accuracy. Remember that at the end of the day, the data that we're posting as the most current data is from yesterday. And that means that today, if the waters clean, and there's a red flag, it means it was dirty yesterday. And if there's a blue flag and they say it's clean it mean it was clean yesterday. So at the end of the day, we can kind of do better than that. But it requires us to be creative and collaborative. And we want to thank you for being both those things.

S**Stephanie Cooper 48:07**

Well, thank you very much, Bruce, like I said, I really appreciate the opportunity to be here. And you know, your your presentation was really helpful, both in showing the signage, showing what works, and maybe what is not working so well. And I think, you know, I know that the water quality testing issues are complicated and you know, we certainly defer to our colleagues, the experts at DPH. And then we just want to make sure that we are reacting and managing with the most current information that's available, and most importantly, that we're getting the word out, like you said quickly, right away and in ways that people can, you know, see and access. So it's, you know, it's continuous improvement, and the way we get there is working together. So we appreciate all the collaborative efforts.

B**Bruce Berman 48:51**

And as Chris often reminds us, you know, that we get \$190,000 to give away but we give away about a quarter of a million, because we all leap in the freezing water to raise money at the Splash. And so we hope that you'll join us and we're counting on you to raise some dough for us, so that we can continue this great program and by you I mean everybody I see.

C**Chris Mancini 49:16**

I was gonna say the same thing, I think you mean everybody in the meeting

B**Bruce Berman 49:19**

Bruce Berman 49:19

I do, you've already started. Mancini, You've already started I think and others on our staff

C

Chris Mancini 49:23

Maya and I already did our first splash.

B

Bruce Berman 49:26

So that means we're covered on the North Shore and we're starting to move in Quincy. Oh, you're doing all the beaches, Right? I got to get to work.

C

Chris Mancini 49:35

Thank you all to our presenters. We'd love to open it to the MBC commissioners and any other electeds for any questions or comments about the presentations or in your communities. If you can use the raise hand function, Maria will bring you through before we go to the public testimony.

C

Chris Mancini 50:03

Oh, you guys really want to stay on track for the agenda.

B

Bruce Berman 50:09

I have a question for our friends from Soofa. If you don't mind, could you talk a little bit about, you know, because, I'm glad you appreciated our presentation, we surely appreciate yours. One of the things that we have to deal with is digital equity. And not everyone has a cell phone. Do you have some data that you could share with us on cell phone participate penetration in our communities? Because we want to make sure that we do this.

D

Daniel West Cohen 50:43

Yeah, that's a great question. We have a document for pretty much everything. So I'm pretty sure we can find that -- Yeah, inundated with documents -- I'm sure we could find some information on cell phone penetration in the communities we work with. I'm not sure if we have it just for the multilingual communities we work with, but I'm sure we have something on that. We do have data though on how many passerbyes interacted with our sign in multilingual settings. So that might be something that's worth looking too.

B

Bruce Berman 51:14

And you also have pedestrian sensing, which means that we could actually and Commissioner Cooper, you might want to think about this, we could actually get counts, or some

Cooper, you might want to think about this, we could actually get counts, or some approximation of counts of actual usage, which has always been a challenge. We may not be able to get the digital signs this year, but we can get the QR codes in a back hand.

D Daniel West Cohen 51:37

That's great. And the way that the pedestrian data works, if everyone here is not familiar, it's with cellular impressions. So when people walk by or signs if you have a Wi Fi enabled device, so a cell phone or an iPad, it'll take a unique impression of you. If you walk back and forth really quickly, it won't double count you. But if you come back a few hours later, it'll count you again. Um, so it's more of like a digital clicker. We don't take privacy data. We're not Orwellian. We're not Facebook. So just something to consider, but he does help you know, who's where and when.

B Bruce Berman 52:11

does that mean, you could take privacy data if you wanted to? That scares me.

D Daniel West Cohen 52:17

I don't think we could do it even if we wanted to.

M Maria Rodriguez 52:21

All right. Thank you so much for that, Daniel. It looks like we have a question from Jason McCann.

J Jason McCann 52:27

Hi, yes, I'm Jason McCann, the Hull town rep for the commission for Nantasket Beach. Commissioner Cooper, thanks for the presentation. I just wanted to ask a general question, what do you see as the biggest challenge for the beaches this summer and getting prepared for the summer season?

S Stephanie Cooper 52:49

That's a good question. I guess I see it as a whole bunch of integrated challenges, right, you have to meet them all in order to be successful. So certainly, lifeguard recruitment is something that's so critical and we are lucky that the Baker Polito Administration has made a lot of resources available to us to support that. So for example, offering some of the highest lifeguard compensation rates in the country actually, and a lot of help from partners to be recruiting folks. And then I think, you know, the issues around unguarded waterfronts, and making sure that we're really being clear with people and keeping them safe and letting them know, these are the places where we have guards, these are the hours where we can help you

be safe in the water, and here are the places that we really don't want you to go because it's just not safe for you. And then I think, also, this is something that we always have to do in partnership with communities and all kinds of organizations is just sort of, you know, activating the spaces. So you know, it's great to come and have a passive day at the beach. I know I personally love that. But we also want to make sure that we have programming and that we have fun things to do and in the theme of this of this conversation, that it reflects the the communities and the languages that people speak too, so that they come. they feel they're invited and and what's there for them is what they're looking for. So I guess it's you know, I look at it as it's all sort of intertwined, and we need to work on on all fronts at the same time.

B

Bruce Berman 54:24

Chris, if I could put Lieutenant Bossi on the spot, I don't mean to do this, but just a casual comment because he knows the beach as well as anyone. Do you think that it would be helpful for enforcement to have some confidence that people knew the rules that you guys were trying to enforce, but better when it comes up?

D

Donald Bossi 54:46

There's no doubt that having them understand the rules, having accessibility to the rules, would make our job much easier. Our job would rather not have to do any work also Summer in their respective rules. Our goal is to not do enforcement, however, makes it difficult if they don't know the rules, makes it further more difficult for us when we can't explain to them what the rules are. So the signage, the QR codes, all of that then would be extremely helpful.

B

Bruce Berman 55:21

We heard the same thing from the environmental police officers, sometimes they arrive at a place where they're not confident that the people that are there understand the regulations, and they're torn between, you know, enforcing them and explaining them, and both of them are part of your responsibility. So, thanks for that. Thanks for being helpful.

D

Donald Bossi 55:43

Sadly, ignorance of the law is no excuse, which is an old adage, however, we're the individuals, we understand that sometimes ignorance is an excuse. We just don't want to be put in that position.

B

Bruce Berman 55:59

We're going to do our best to help.

D

Donald Bossi 56:00

Thank you.

M Maria Rodriguez 56:02

alright, thank you so much, Lieutenant. And for now to keep on with the agenda, I'm going to ask once again, if we would like to receive any comments from any commissioners or public officials.

M Maria Rodriguez 56:20

Barbara, would you like to say something?

B Barbara Bishop 56:23

Well, excuse me, you can see behind me, we had a sign made from Vistaprint. Big banner. And we put it up for our program last summer, we we had it up for our movie night event, and we put it near the entrance to the beach. However, now that we think about it, the movie, of course, was in English. But, it's I guess it's a first step of trying to get people who don't traditionally come to the beach, to try to feel welcome and come back. If anybody wants the file, I'll be happy to send it out, you can just change the name at the top.

M Maria Rodriguez 57:08

Thank you.

C Chris Mancini 57:09

Thank you, Barbara.

M Maria Rodriguez 57:11

It looks like representative Giannino has comments.

J Jessica Giannino 57:15

Thank you, Maria. I just wanted to say thank you to Soofa for the presentation as the rep from Revere, those signs have been incredibly helpful. And I know we have a piece of legislation moving forward right now so we can run a conduit to put one of these signs on Revere Beach. So as soon as that goes through, and there's a little land transfer going on, they'll be able to run the conduit so we can put this kiosk on the beach. So we already have on I believe on Shirley Ave and some other parts of the city and they are helpful, you know, if you want to show a snow emergency, if you want to show if there's a flag on the beach for a variety of reasons. But a huge, huge, huge help to the city. So thank you guys for being here. Thanks,

Lieutenant for being here. I'm excited to hear some testimony from, I know some of Revere residents are going to be here today. But thank you to the commissioners, my fellow Commissioners and save the harbor for everything you do. And Commissioner Cooper for being with us as well.

M

Maria Rodriguez 58:13

Thank you so much. Is there any other elected officials that would like to give comment?

M

Maria Rodriguez 58:22

All right, thank you so much. Now we will be moving on to public testimony. And we will be hearing from Nina Liang, the City Councilor at Large from the city of Quincy.

N

Nina Liang 58:34

Thank you. Good morning everyone, I am really excited to be able to be here and speak on behalf of my constituents here in the city of Quincy, but also frankly, on behalf of myself and my family. We are all, my parents, my aunts, my uncles, they're immigrants from China, and my cousins and I grew up here. And you know, for those who don't know Quincy, you have 27 miles of coastline. And it spans, you know, a good chunk of the neighborhoods that are primarily where AAPI residents are residing. And it's a beautiful beach, we had renovated, what feels like not too long ago. But it's a beautiful place to walk your dogs, to jog, to get some exercise. And it's, you know, super important, I think for us in Quincy to make sure that whenever there are notices, important notices, right, where you maybe can't swim in the water that day, or you, for whatever reason, can't access the beach or there's notices for emergencies. It's just, it's really important to make sure that our population is able to understand and read those signs for safety measures, but also for fun things, right, exciting things that are happening along the beach as well. And so, you know, we have close to now, probably 40% of our population is API. And you know, I'd be remiss if I didn't come on here and advocate for the fact that, you know, we can't communicate properly with any of these residents if we don't have interpretation services available for them. One of the things that I'm trying to champion here in the city right now locally, is language access, right, because again, there are so many notices that go out for emergency purposes, but also for benefits, right, to the residents. And you know there are these amazing efforts to do these things and to offer these services. But not to sound crass, it's kind of pointless, right, if such a large part of the population can't understand it to then take advantage of those things. And so I think we're certainly trying to make the effort here on the local level, it would be great if we can continue to have that support coming from other areas as well. So I would very much appreciate if we can move forward and create better access. So thank you.

M

Maria Rodriguez 1:00:41

Thank you so much for your comment. That was amazing.

C Chris Mancini 1:00:43

Yeah, thank you, Councilor Liang for being here. We really appreciate you making time for the commission today.

M Maria Rodriguez 1:00:51

All right, and next we will hear from Maya Smith, the partnership and Program Development Director from Save the Harbor/Save the Bay.

M Maya Smith 1:01:00

Thank you, Maria. And thank you again, Nina, for being here, Councilor Liang. So I am the Director of Partnerships and program development at Save the Harbor/Save the Bay and that includes our better beaches program, which is a partnership with DCR, where we award over \$200,000 out to community organizations and local community members to activate all of these beautiful beaches from Nahant to Nantasket. And as Commissioner Cooper said before, we awarded these grants to 67 different organizations and community members last year. And I hope that there are some prospective new grantees on this zoom call today, if you're interested in this grant process, please let me know. But as someone who got to go to all of these different events last summer, it's very clear that events that have -- first of all, when there's diversity in the programming that is huge, when there are music options that are in different languages that represent the community, when there's food options that represent the community. Those events seem to be so well attended and so well enjoyed. Because as folks have said today, every person has the right to go and enjoy this programming on the beach and has the right to enjoy just sitting on the beach but having the safety of knowing what is happening and being able to understand the signs and being able to understand if there's something awesome like a movie on Winthrop beach or something great on Nantasket happening. Everyone should be able to access these things and having translated signage is crucial to that. And translation in the outreach materials and translation with the programming that's happening. In super diverse communities like Quincy, where I live I can see that there are so many different community members who would love to access the beach, who are currently using the beach all the time. But having language, having signage in multiple languages, programming in multiple languages will just make that space all the more welcoming and make more sense for all of the community to be there and enjoy the space that belongs to them. So I'm so grateful that so many of you are committed to this and passionate about it. And I am excited to see some of these updates, hopefully coming soon to our beaches because I know that the community, enjoy our beaches and will love to have the opportunity to have greater access through these translations. And so thank you for letting me speak today. Again, if anyone here is interested in the better beaches grant program, please reach out to me. I love the grantees so much and I'm so excited for this summer. So thank you again.

M Maria Rodriguez 1:04:10

Thank you Maya, next we'll hear from Jacqueline Chavez. She's a Revere resident.

M Maria Rodriguez 1:04:10

J Jacqueline Chavez 1:04:18

Hi, everyone. Thank you so much for the invitation to share my testimony and perspective. As Maria said, my name is Jacqueline Chavez. My pronouns are she/ella and I work in state education policy at various DEI initiatives across the Commonwealth and Revere which is my community. The perspective I share today is that which the family, students, and community members I work with have presented to me to share today. It's not just my voice, but those of the people I represent. And so some of the language focus barriers I believe that many people who do not predominantly speak English face, have already been spoken about. So it's having multiple languages represented in signs at beaches and then just the limited digital promotion and possible advertisement of our beaches and diverse forums. And so I really want to push that second point a little further. I know Revere, and many cities represented here today have great social media and use forums to advertise what their respective cities are doing. And Revere specifically in the past year has increased this to have it in multiple languages, specifically the predominant ones in Revere. But I want to take that even further and I see room for growth when it comes to collaboration between our cities, the commission and Save the Harbor, and social media platforms and use forums that are predominantly used in different cultures and languages.

J Jacqueline Chavez 1:05:42

So my first question to the commission is, in addition to adding translated signage on beaches, and increasing translated digital outreach, in English predominant media forums, how can we partner with BIPOC and linguistically diverse mainstream forums that are using other cultures and in different languages so that they can better outreach and communicate about events and information regarding our beaches to their court base. And another point I want to emphasize is the importance multifaceted barriers can play in the effort to make your beaches more accessible. So I, from the people I represent, and a lot of the families I work with, only a handful have a car to get to a beach. And so all though Revere has a T stop right on the beach --

M Maria Rodriguez 1:06:35

Jacqueline, I don't mean to interrupt, but the interpreters asked if you could speak a little bit slower.

J Jacqueline Chavez 1:06:40

Okay, yeah. No worries. So it's getting to the beach without a car can take up to one and a half to two hours. So how are we also thinking about these multifaceted barriers and trying to create accessibility for people who don't dominantly speak English. And my final point is just to the commission as a whole. So having this hearing on Zoom, and having multiple translators translating live is a great first step. But I know very few working class families that could attend and will be willing to take two hours off of work to just hear or participate. And so my final question or right push for the commission is, if the goal is to have diverse voices and perspectives at the table for issues like these, how are we making the space to have them available and hours that work for working class people, and in a way that doesn't further hinder the voices that commission is seeking to amplify? So thank you all.

C Chris Mancini 1:07:44

Thank you so much, Jacqueline, for those comments and questions. And I think, you know, Save the Harbor is here for all those purposes. And I mean, you said a few things that I would love to jump on right away. And I think, in particular, the social media, you know, what are the outlets that are being used by various cultures that are maybe not my predominant form of online messaging. So we'd love to work with you more closely on that, or get some get some specific insight that you might have. And then I know, Maya and Kristen, and, Nicholas, I know, will certainly be jumping right into that, probably this week to start thinking about that. And I just want to acknowledge your other point about the hours of the hearings. And I know this hearing today is at 10am to noon on a Wednesday, we do know that that is not ideal for everybody. And we have in the past and we will in the future, do these hearings and do more meetings. So they will be at alternate hours on evenings or weekends. That will be more user friendly to the general public. So thank you, I just want to acknowledge your comments there. And then we are and we'll be thinking about those things.

M Maria Rodriguez 1:09:03

Yes, thank you so much Jacqueline, that was great. And next we will hear from Ghizlane. She is also a Revere resident. Did I pronounce that right? I'm sorry.

G Ghiz Benzerjeb 1:09:20

My name is pronounced Ghiz. My pronouns are she/her/hers. Hi, everyone

M Maria Rodriguez 1:09:24

Ghizlane, okay, thank you.

G Ghiz Benzerjeb 1:09:27

Alright, um, first of all, thank you, Jessica, for inviting me here. Again. It's really great to see all of you guys and participate in this conversation and just hear what everyone has to say. Secondly, I want to talk on behalf of the Arabic language you know, Arabic speakers in Revere Beach. You know, now that I'm speaking on this topic, something that just happened to come to mind was maybe including some diversity, maybe some, you know, different language options for even food options at the beach, having certain, you know, someone wants to order good old Cheesy fries and you know, haddock sandwich maybe someone who is an Arabic speaker, you know, from the region of Northern Africa Middle East might not even know what the fish haddock is, that might be a bit confusing to them. But if there is a you know, multiple language options for certain menus along Revere Beach or any of the beaches that are you know, being spoken upon today, that could be a really cool way to spruce things up a bit and bring more accessibility in regards to actually being able to communicate and wanting to engage with people around you or just even the food around you. So that was one bit and I do have a little something I want to say in Arabic but um you know,

G Ghiz Benzerjeb 1:10:48
[Arabic]

G Ghiz Benzerjeb 1:11:00
pardon my Arabic for the last bit. But it's really important that families are able to actually be able to understand what they're looking at in terms of signage, especially with COVID. But I pretty much just had the tidbit about the menu. Thanks, everyone.

M Maria Rodriguez 1:11:16
Thank you so much. That was great. We appreciate it. Does anyone have any comments to say about that? All right, thank you. So we will be moving on to Mercy Robinson, the Executive Director of South Boston en Accion

M Mercy Robinson 1:11:34
Thank you, thank you guys for having me. I wanted to say thank you for the usage of QR codes, I feel like it is something that is opening a lot of doors for a lot of people to be provided so much information and having to be able to carry it around with them is essential. I'm sorry, I wrote something down. In South Boston, we have a growing diverse population, it would be nice if that is reflected on signage at our beach, it was great to see, again, the use of the QR codes. I love the system. And I believe this can be very helpful in providing more information for beach goers. I myself go to the beach a lot. For me, it's easy, because it's a short walk away, as it is for a lot of our South Boston residents. So we tend, some of us tend to use the beach a lot, but it's not as diverse as I would like it to be. I do plan on making or having some activities at Carson beach and the adjacent Moakley Park. And it would be nice if everyone attending these activities are able to understand the rules, regulations, notices, and what is allowed and not allowed on the beach. I would also like to see a directory of where things are allowed. You know, for example, you are not able to grill on Carson beach, but it is allowed at Castle Island. And little information like that I think also does prevent situations where law enforcement has to be involved. And this is part of a lot of commentary that I'm hearing from a lot of residents that they would love to see, not only it'd be a more inclusive towards people but also inclusive towards pets. Southie has a very growing doggie population. So a lot of residents would love to see an area where families can go to the beach with their pets. Some of them have even suggested I guess there's a little beach space between William J. De Boulevard and Head Island Causeway across from Lago playground, which is apart from everywhere else. And people who don't have dogs don't have to worry about that little stretch of beach. But that's just from their voices, that was like the consensus at a lot of the meetings that they would love to be able to go to the beach with their family pet. But also to be able to understand where they can go or not. Um, but I want to thank you everybody for having me. And it was great to hear changes that are getting implemented.

C Chris Mancini 1:14:12

Thank you so much. Mercy. I mean, those are great comments. And I like the way you wrap that up. Dogs in the beach are a complicated issue. So it's certainly something we could talk offline a little bit more about, but we know that that comment is out there and I won't get into it right now, but there are some issues related to it. But we are aware

B

Bruce Berman 1:14:38

counterbalanced by the opposite opinion by a lot of people. You know, and it's really hard. One of the things I think Chris is really good at is making people understand that in a complicated world, we hear people but we can't always do everything. There is a great dog park though right around the corner. You guys have one of the best dog parks in the city. Over at -

M

Mercy Robinson 1:15:01

I personally don't have a dog yet, but it is a situation that a lot of people are feeling strongly about. And for me, it's like, what if the poop gets into the water, but I can see where a lot of people and like pros and cons to it

B

Bruce Berman 1:15:19

Mercy, give me a call, I've got a study about the concentration of dog poop in pleasure bay that you'll just really want to look at.

M

Maria Rodriguez 1:15:30

Well, thank you so much for that wonderful testimony, Mercy. Next, we'll be hearing from Alex DeFronzo, the Executive Director of Piers Park Sailing.

A

Alex DeFronzo 1:15:42

Thank you, Maria. And thank you everyone at Save the Harbor/Save the Bay and all the commissioners. I know, I've said it before, but I'll say it again, I feel like the times when the beaches feel the most welcoming and inclusive is when there's Better Beaches Programming going on. And, you know, signage is super important. But so is the programming that actually gets people to go to the beach and enjoy the beach, and appreciate everything that everyone that is here does to make that happen. The only real comment I want to make is the importance of continuity around the signage and rules are the beaches too. A lot of the beach experience that families enjoy isn't just at the beach, they're also at the parks that are adjacent to the beaches, and the different ways that you get to the beach. And a lot of times it's, you know, different entities that are in charge. So you can be on a City of Boston Park and then cross the street and be on a DCR beach. And in East Boston, you could you know, be a Noyse Park, walk across the pedestrian bridge -- So you're in the city of Boston Park, walk across the bridge, be on a DCR beach, and then, you know, enter the Greenway and be in a Massport Park. And each of the three spots might have different rules and different signs. And some of them

are in multiple languages, and some of them are not. And I think that adds confusion. And the more continuity that there is, you know, in those kind of confined areas where a family is going to just be experiencing a day out at the beach, but also be at the park, it's important to have everyone on the same page about what's okay and not okay to do and make sure that the signs are, you know, in the same style and in multiple languages. Thank you.

M

Maria Rodriguez 1:17:22

Thank you so much. Does anyone have any comments to say on that testimony or on the previous testimony, I realized I didn't ask for that one.

C

Chris Mancini 1:17:33

I just wanted to say this is the public testimony, we have a number of folks pre registered to speak, but this is also open to anyone on the hearing, which you can, you know, indicate by using the raise hand function as we all know and zoom at this point. And I did also want to point out, we tend to usually go in order from either north to south or south to north, we try to alternate when we do our metropolitan beaches Commission hearings. And last time we did go north to south. So we were trying to go south to north this time. But we also were accommodating a few folks schedules. So it does appear I think as a bit of a random order.

C

Chris Mancini 1:18:23

I do know a few other folks are about to join us to register comments as well. And if anyone has joined us in the past, you know half hour, please make sure to introduce yourself in the chat, name and affiliation. And again, if you've have joined us, you know this is the open comment period. And please just raise your hand and let us know. I am stalling a little bit because I know someone is about to join, who'd like to make a comment.

B

Bruce Berman 1:19:02

Chris if I can just say, I know there's a number of folks from the press here. And if you guys could stick around after the meeting, if you want to talk to Chris or to arrange an interview with the chairs, we'd be glad to facilitate that. Otherwise, we'll be sending out a release shortly afterwards with some of the unbelievably powerful testimony that we've heard today.

M

Maya Smith 1:19:26

I just wanted to quickly say during this lull, also I just saw that mercy commented about the All Access program that I just wanted to say all access will be running again this year. You'll all be getting some info from Preston, I'm sure in the following weeks and months. We will be doing all access Boston Harbor again this summer. So we're super excited to be able to go out to spectacle in Georgia. So if you're interested, please message us as well.

B

Bruce Berman 1:19:54

Yeah the most important word in any language for our programs is free and So I'm going to learn how to say that in about nine languages by the time --

C

Chris Mancini 1:20:07

and all access will be back multiple days a week this year also.

B

Bruce Berman 1:20:14

Why would this build up? Whoever's gonna come in better be --

C

Chris Mancini 1:20:16

Yeah, no pressure, no pressure at all. Well, she is at work. And so she is to Jacqueline's point, you know, she may not quite make it. But we know she's also in touch with us.

M

Maria Rodriguez 1:20:33

It looks like Barbara, yeah.

B

Barbara Bishop 1:20:37

Well, I'd just like to say thank you to everyone for organizing this hearing. And I'd just like to add that, at the last hearing, I was so inspired that I wanted to start a little organization here in Winthrop, that would help provide access to the beach for people with disabilities. So who knows what will come out of this one, let's hope that a lot of good signage will happen and more people will have access to our beaches and enjoy the beach experience this summer.

C

Chris Mancini 1:21:14

And don't forget that we have funds to help purchase beach wheelchairs and mats accessibility mats

B

Barbara Bishop 1:21:22

we'll be calling you.

B

Bruce Berman 1:21:24

And so does Smile Massachusetts as well.

B Barbara Bishop 1:21:29
Thank you.

C Chris Mancini 1:21:32
Alright, I know Nicole is at work. So she may not actually end up making it in time. So, if there are no other comments, for the public testimony, then I would like to

M Maria Rodriguez 1:21:46
it actually looks like Nicole McClain just joined

C Chris Mancini 1:21:49
Oh, terrific.

M Maria Rodriguez 1:21:53
Hi, Nicole. Can you hear us?

C Chris Mancini 1:22:12
Did we lose her? Nicole, are you here? Oh, there you are. I know your work. Thanks so much for joining. Yes, we can hear you, absolutely. But we just wanted to say sorry, I know you just joined the meeting, but we have just arrived - we went south to north - and we have just arrived in Lynn, so to speak, if you had any comment on language accessibility you did want to make at this point?

N Nicole McClain 1:22:40
Well, I used to go to the beach frequently. And I'm going to say when I'm at the beach, I really am concerned because I'm an English speaker and when I'm out there and I see Spanish speaking residents in the water, wondering, are they reading the small signs? The signs firstly, aren't even very visible. And then, you know, there's a huge population in Lynn that isn't English speaking. So that has always been my concern, because they're in the water, they're swimming, and not looking for the signage, it's a public beach, people are thinking that they are able to use it, you know, no one's thinking all the beach is not safe to use. So they're not even looking for the signage first off, and then the signage isn't in their native language secondly. So it's just a huge problem and you know, this is a huge concern in the city of Lynn with language barriers on the beach.

C Chris Mancini 1:23:44

Thanks so much, Nicole, for driving that point home, which picks up on the presentation earlier on the importance especially around water quality and public health for these issues, thank you. Alright, well, with that. I will say that for the third consecutive time, we have been on schedule in our Metropolitan Beaches Commission hearings. Actually, this is the first time we've been ahead of schedule so,

M Maria Rodriguez 1:24:10

We're still waiting on one more person. Julia Mejia might join. I just checked in with her chief of staff and she texted her to see if she will be able to join, otherwise they will submit written testimony. But can we just hang around maybe like three more minutes and see if they'll join

B Bruce Berman 1:24:36

this is the challenge of being so efficient and well organized

C Chris Mancini 1:24:40

Yeah, right.

B Bruce Berman 1:24:41

People thought they had an extra half hour. Just one quick thing, if anybody does have a picture of a sign that they think is either really amusing or really problematic. If you please send it to us. To [info@save the harbor.org](mailto:info@save-the-harbor.org), or to me personally, at Bruce@Bostonharbor.com, every now and then we get a laugh out of it, mostly we get good ideas from them. And we've been getting quite a few of them. They don't have to be on a DCR beach.

C Chris Mancini 1:25:17

Just a quick look ahead, as I said, this is our third hearing in this series. And this process actually began in 2019, as we held community hearings on maintenance and infrastructure issues on the beaches. And we are going to be following up with some more targeted hearings. And this is gonna culminate this April, we are honing in on a date for the summit, where we will report back to folks and to everyone who's participated in this process with our draft report, which will be the third metropolitan beaches commission report on the state of the beaches. And this will be the roadmap for the next five or so years on these issues for us to work together to address as the commission and as community partners. So these hearings and these conversations we've been having, the written testimony that we've received, and the responses to our surveys have been the foundation of this process. And so I can't stress enough how important all of your participation is. And thank you again, to all of the community members who did make time in the middle of your work day, or whenever it was to join these

various ones. And so thinking ahead, we will be carefully considering what time of day and what day of week, we will be hosting the summit so that we can have the most participation as possible.

M Maria Rodriguez 1:26:52

It looks like Councilmember Mejia is going to hop on, like really soon so.

B Bruce Berman 1:27:01

And that said, unfortunately this year, we don't have a conflict with the Super Bowl like we've so often had in the past when we tried to schedule our meetings, because it's really hard to get people to come when the Patriots are in the Super Bowl, but alas that isn't happening this year anyway.

C Chris Mancini 1:27:17

Its really good news, bad news sort of situation.

B Bruce Berman 1:27:20

It's a bad news, Good news situation. Thanks for everyone's patience. Yes, and Councilors with us,

M Maria Rodriguez 1:27:46

Councilor Majia, can you hear us?

J Julia Mejia 1:27:48

Yes, I can.

M Maria Rodriguez 1:27:50

Hi, thank you so much for joining us. We really appreciate it. Whenever you're ready, no pressure, we are ready to hear your testimony.

J Julia Mejia 1:27:59

Okay, sorry that I'm in my car. I was just at a funeral and I'm trying to make all of this happen. But just thank you for the invitation to be here with you all. Thank you to the chair. And for the record, my name is Julia Mejia, I'm an at large City Councilor here in the City of Boston. I grew

up in Boston in a largely Spanish only speaking community. And at some points in my life, I was just less than a couple of miles away from our city beaches. But I have a few, if any memories of ever going to any of the Boston beaches to be completely transparent. But what I do remember, is seeing a photo of black protesters being chased on horseback for trying to desegregate Carlson beach. So from an early age, I had learned that our public beaches weren't for people like me, either because of the color of our skin, or because of the language that we spoke. years later, even though on the surface we have desegregated our public beaches, In in reality, these spaces are still inaccessible for people who speak languages other than English. Despite being a coastal city, we are still seeing major inequities, in terms of who has access to the utilization of our public beaches. It is not just a matter of finding ways to get people to those spaces. It's a matter of letting people know that they belong in those spaces.

J

Julia Mejia 1:29:29

Our office conducted a study back in 2021, asking people to rate the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. And we found that people who receive the most services rated the government's response worse than people who received the fewest services. What this tells us is that the people who routinely lack access to government services have so few expectations of our government that whatever the city can do for them, even if it's the bare minimum seems like a lot. We need to be teaching our communities that they can expect more. And I think it starts with opening up access to our public spaces. Boston's waterfront belongs to all of us. And I mean all means all. In terms of solutions, I think we need to be listening to people who are living the realities, what is keeping them from utilizing our waterfront? Do they even know Boston has public beaches, we need to be creating clear pathways towards introducing waterfront to communities of people who do not think that this is a safe space for them. People often say that if you build it, they will come. But it is in this instance, Simply building these spaces is not enough. We have a lot of work to do moving forward to ensure that our public beaches are here for everyone, I hope that our office can play a vital part in the conversation. And that in the years to come, our public spaces resemble more accurately our community, you know, and I will just have to say in closing, I never really learned how to swim. And when I look at a lot of the signs, oftentimes in our public beaches, everything still is very much in English. And I think we need to do a better job at making sure that we are, if we're really serious about creating spaces where people are seeing and reflecting them, you know, translation and information justice is also part of that conversation. So thank you for giving me the opportunity to be with you all here today.

C

Chris Mancini 1:31:37

Thank you so much, Councilor Majia, I'm Chris Mancini, the executive director at Save the Harbor. And we really appreciate you being here. I'm sorry for your situation and your loss, and we know you're very busy and you had a complicated schedule today. So we appreciate you making time. And thank you so much, we really look forward to working with your office in Dorchester and on the beaches to find more and better ways to do this. But your comments are very close to our hearts. Sorry, I'm speaking for our entire staff. But I feel like I know you all well enough to maybe say that these are the values of Save the Harbor, part of me wondered, if you're reading our mission statement or something before you wrote your comments, but it's so in sync with how we are approaching our thoughts about this. So thank you very much.

J Julia Mejia 1:32:29

Thank you, looking forward to being in community with you all and doing whatever it takes. So thank you so very much.

B Bruce Berman 1:32:36

And if you want to learn how to swim, we have partners at the YMCA and Boston Center for Youth and Families who will help you and not tell anybody.

J Julia Mejia 1:32:42

Yeah, yeah. And this is being recorded. So I think I just outed myself and the fact that I'm still afraid to swim, but I appreciate the invite, and maybe I should have the courage to probably inspire other people. I mean, literally, the best water sports for me were the fire hydrant. I know, back in the day, that was, you know, so frowned upon, but like that was the most watersports that I would get during the summer. So thank you.

M Maya Smith 1:33:05

The Boston Harbor woman of color coalition is also here for you and we're having some community conversations about specifically what stops women of color from learning to swim and the fears there. So we're also here for you.

J Julia Mejia 1:33:20

I'll be your poster child hit me up. Okay.

C Chris Mancini 1:33:23

Yeah, I'll definitely send you more information about the Boston Harbor woman of color coalition and other resources that Save the Harbor has around swimming, safety and everything.

C Chris Mancini 1:33:33

Thank you.

C Chris Mancini 1:33:38

So final call for any comments before we wrap up for the day. I believe Senator Creighton had to leave but I wanted to one more time, you can ever thank people enough I think, thank all of our commissioners from the Metropolitan beaches commission for being here. I won't list you

our commissioners, from the Metropolitan beaches commission for being here. I won't list you all by name. There are so many of you. And you're all fantastic. Thanks to DCR, DPH, the Massachusetts State Police, MWRA, DMF And, of course, to all the representatives who showed up here from your communities from your organization's on a Wednesday morning to be a part of this conversation. And of course, thanks to our City Councilors from Quincy and Boston for being here and commenting as well. I believe Senator Creighton had to step out but representative Madaro would you have any any closing remarks?

A

Adrian Madaro 1:34:38

Sure, thank you, Chris. Just want to thank you and your team at Save the Harbor/Save the Bay for hosting this important hearing. I want to thank all those who were able to join today to testify and share their perspectives. Want to thank my colleagues on the Metropolitan beached commission for your work on bettering our public beaches and always staying so engaged on so many issues that matter to our beaches and You know, really I think today's hearing was quite important. We heard some really enlightening perspectives from folks on an issue that has long plagued our public beaches, but it's certainly something that we can do and work together to make some improvements. And I am confident that we'll continue to improve accessibility and our beaches and make them the best public resources possible for everyone. Thank you.

C

Chris Mancini 1:35:25

Thank you so much. All right. Well, if folks would like to stay in chat more casually, we will end the recording now, and members of the press would like to stick around and talk a little bit more.