

Pamela Ojeda  
Chief of Police  
2250 Las Vegas Blvd North, Suite 300  
North Las Vegas, NV 89030

Dear Chief Ojeda,

The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing is deeply concerned by reports that officers of the North Las Vegas Police Department violated the rights of a Deaf woman (e.g. [this report from Fox 5 Las Vegas](#)) during an incident on April 7, 2021. According to the individual's account and news reports, officers restrained her hands preventing her from using her primary language, American Sign Language. Furthermore, officers apparently attempted to have the individual's children interpret their instructions for their mother. According to the individual's account and news reports, she was detained for not complying with instructions from the officers that she could not possibly have understood. It should be obvious that announcing directions in spoken English from behind a face covering is insufficient when attempting to effectively communicate with a Deaf individual.

Approximately 1 in 5 Americans live with a disability. It is critically important that all Nevadans have equal access public entities in our state as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Law enforcement agencies are "public entities" under the ADA and are prohibited from discriminating against individuals with disabilities. Further, Title II of the ADA has been consistently held to apply to police investigations and arrests, with very limited exceptions for exigent circumstances.

It is apparent from this incident that the officers of the North Las Vegas Police Department lack sufficient training in the rights of Deaf individuals and how to communicate effectively with members of the Deaf community. The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing would welcome the opportunity for a dialog with the leadership of the North Las Vegas Police Department to assist the Department in receiving this vital training.

We are including the Nevada Attorney General in this communication. The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing have an abiding interest in ensuring that the rights of deaf and hard of hearing individuals throughout the state of Nevada are treated fairly and in accordance with their rights under the law, and furthermore that law enforcement agencies throughout the state be held accountable for respecting the rights of all deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Sincerely,