For Immediate Release
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MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE ADAM BELLO ANNOUNCES ASL LANGUAGE INTERPRETING PILOT PROGRAM AT FREDERICK DOUGLASS GREATER ROCHESTER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Deaf and hard-of-hearing travelers now have 24/7 access to live ASL interpreters through free AIRA ASL mobile phone app

GATES, NY — Monroe County Executive Adam Bello today announced the launch of a new pilot program providing greater accessibility for the deaf and hard-of-hearing at the Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport (ROC). Beginning immediately, anyone in the ROC Airport terminal can access the AIRA ASL smartphone app, a service that connects deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals with professional, remote American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters around the clock.

The AIRA ASL app allows users to communicate in real time with employees of the airport at key points throughout their travel journey – including check-in, TSA screening, dining areas and during inquiries about flight delays or flight information. There is no cost to users at the airport.

“Monroe County is proud to be home to one of the largest populations of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the nation. This new technology ensures our airport is more accessible, inclusive and equitable by breaking down communication barriers for both residents and visitors,” **said County Executive Bello**. “Thank you to Airport Director Andy Moore and his team for their leadership and commitment to expanding ASL access.”

“Our airport is a critical transportation hub, and ensuring that all members of our community, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing, can access it with confidence and clarity is essential,” **said Legislature President Yversha Román.** “This pilot program empowers travelers to better understand what’s happening around them and navigate the airport safely. As a co-founder of the Monroe County Language Access Coalition, I’ve heard firsthand how often this need goes unmet. I’m proud that sustained advocacy has helped bring this much-needed resource to life and made the airport a more accessible and equitable space for all.”

“Access to communication is a fundamental right. The AIRA ASL App helps us take an important step towards making travel more inclusive, equitable, and seamless for the deaf and hard of hearing community. I am proud to see the Frederick Douglass Greater

Rochester Airport lead with innovation and inclusivity," **said Monroe County Legislature Majority Leader Michael Yudelson.**

This pilot project marks the second collaboration between ROC Airport and AIRA. For navigation and visual information, the airport provides blind and low-vision travelers with the AIRA Explorer app, connecting them to trained visual interpreters for real-time support.

"Our partnership with Rochester Airport is a vital step in creating an inclusive travel experience. For the Deaf and hard of hearing community in Rochester—a city with one of the largest Deaf populations in the U.S.—this collaboration ensures that accessibility isn't an afterthought, but a fundamental part of every journey. With Aira ASL, navigating the airport becomes more independent, seamless, and empowering for the Deaf and hard of hearing travelers," **said Henri Grau, Aira's Director of the Deaf & Hard of Hearing Community Engagement.**

"In a fast-moving airport environment, timely access to information is essential to ensure a positive travel experience when checking in, going through security, navigating a gate change, finding your baggage, getting a rental car, and more," **said Charles McFadden, executive director of pre-college programs at Rochester Institute of Technology's National Technical Institute for the Deaf.** "Monroe County and the Airport's willingness to acknowledge the communication access needs of Rochester's vibrant Deaf community and take steps towards addressing them makes a difference —not just in one's journey that day, but in how residents and visitors view Rochester as a whole. Every action taken to make our airport more accessible for all sends a powerful message: everyone is welcome here."

"This is a welcome step toward more inclusive travel for people from and passing through Monroe County. As a newly formed council, the DEC looks forward to supporting continued efforts that build on the airport's commitment to advancing accessibility and awareness in our community," **said Davin Searls, Monroe County Deaf Equity Council Representative.**

The AIRA ASL app has been successfully implemented in major transit hubs across the country, including Minneapolis–Saint Paul International Airport. At ROC, signage with QR codes is prominently displayed throughout the terminal, enabling travelers to download the app directly to their Apple or Android devices with ease and connect with an interpreter within seconds.

The new AIRA ASL app, along with the AIRA Explorer app, wheelchair service, customer convenience phones, hearing loops, ample accessible parking, and a pet-relief area for service animals, strengthens the airport's dedication to accessibility.

Commission on RASE

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