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March 5, 2024

The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk  
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee  
241 House Office Building  
Annapolis MD 21401

***RE: Letter of Information – House Bill 987 – State Government - Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency - Modifications***

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers the following information on House Bill 987 for the Committee's consideration.

House Bill 987 would alter provisions of law related to equal access to public services for individuals with limited English proficiency by establishing requirements related to State departments, agencies, or programs that establish new positions, establishing a certain language access plan, developing certain guides, and offering certain interpretation service.

As direct recipients of federal funds, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) and State Highway Administration currently meet federal Language Access provisions through administration of Title VI plans. MTA's Title VI notice includes nondiscrimination language, complaint procedures, available language services, which are submitted to the Federal Transit Administration triennially. MTA's call center currently accepts requests for translated materials, the MTA utilizes multiple services that are available to provide meaningful access to Limited English Proficiency populations, including language line services, interpreter services, and translator services. SHA also uses the State language line when language services are needed, including when the Administration encounters a non-English speaking motorist that has experienced an accident or mechanical issue along State highways. The Office of Equal Opportunity is the point of contact for this and other language services, and SHA maintains a dedicated Title VI manager for these and other Title VI issues. When SHA holds public meetings on projects, SHA provides language services to parties if notified of the need in advance of the meeting.

Currently, the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) has an established process when forms are identified as needing translation into a foreign language. The process for translation, along with the layout/redesign of the physical form can take up to 12 business days from beginning to end. This includes the time for MVA to request and approve the translation quote, receive the translation, and redesign the form into the new language. MVA forms can change frequently based on new policy or procedures, or to clarify content for a better customer experience. On average MVA's Offices of Customer Engagement averages more than 20 substantial changes to forms annually. The Forms Control Specialist is the sole employee responsible for coordinating this process and the physical redesign of the form.

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To accomplish the requirements of House Bill 987, MDOT and its modal administrations would need additional staff and resources.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests that the committee consider this information when deliberating House Bill 987.

Respectfully submitted,

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