

CANDACE McLAREN LANHAM
Chief Deputy Attorney General

CAROLYN A. QUATTROCKI
Deputy Attorney General

LEONARD HOWIE
Deputy Attorney General



ANTHONY G. BROWN
Attorney General

CHRISTIAN E. BARRERA
Chief Operating Officer

ZENITA WICKHAM HURLEY
Chief, Equity, Policy, and Engagement

PETER V. BERNS
General Counsel

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

WRITER'S DIRECT DIAL NO

FACSIMILE NO.
(410) 576-7036

(410) 576-6592

March 5, 2024

TO: The Honorable Josaline Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Tiffany Johnson Clark
Chief Counsel, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: House Bill 987 - State Government - Equal Access to Public Services for
Individuals With Limited English Proficiency – Modification (**Letter of
Information**)

The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) respectfully submits this Committee with a letter of information regarding House Bill 987 - State Government - Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals With Limited English Proficiency – Modification sponsored by Delegate Gabriel Acevero. House Bill 987 (1) requires certain departments, agencies, and programs to establish and post a language access plan; establish a language access policy and standard operating procedure, and provide information regarding free legal services available to low income individuals and those with limited English proficiency, among other things and (2) requires the Office of the Attorney General to provide oversight, monitoring, investigation, and enforcement of each department, agency, and program that has to comply with the language access provisions of the bill.

While OAG recognizes and supports the intent of the House Bill 987 and believes that language should not be a barrier to accessing public services, we do not agree that OAG is the proper agency to enforce the provisions of the bill. The Attorney General is the chief legal officer of the State. The

Attorney General's Office has general charge, supervision and direction of the legal business of the State, acting as legal advisors and representatives of the major agencies, various boards, commissions, officials and institutions of State Government. This professional responsibility to our agency clients would significantly undermine OAG's ability to provide the oversight, monitoring, investigation, and enforcement of our agency clients that House Bill 987 requires.

We respectfully request that you consider this letter of information when deliberating House Bill 987.

cc: Committee Members