



**TESTIMONY FOR HB0987
Equal Access to Public Services
for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency**

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Acevero

Committee: Health and Government Operations

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0987 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

HB0987 would increase the accountability of our state agencies in providing enhanced communication pathways for individuals with limited language access. Language Access Compliance Program Coordinators would be hired to 1) develop access plans, to be revised over time, 2) oversee the implementation of these plans, and 3) prevent language-based discrimination violations, among other responsibilities. The Office of the Attorney General will play a crucial role in overseeing, monitoring, investigating, and enforcing the bill's language access provisions.

Communication barriers can hinder individuals from accessing our essential state programs, services, and activities. This bill fosters enhanced communication for our disabled and immigrant communities. By communicating more effectively, we better serve our diverse populations while fostering inclusion.

HB0987 seeks to promote equal access to state agencies by addressing language barriers faced by individuals with limited English or communication abilities. These individuals help support our economy and pay into our tax base. It is only fair that we make our government as accessible as possible to all our residents.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.