

April 3, 2025

Testimony on House Bill 1473
State Government - Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals With Limited English
Proficiency and Individuals With Disabilities
Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

Maryland Nonprofits is the statewide association representing nonprofit organizations and institutions in every county in Maryland. We urge you to support House Bill 1473.

As passed by the House of Delegates, House Bill 1473 will:

- alter the laws relating to equal access to public services for individuals with limited English proficiency to include individuals with disabilities;
- establish requirements for equal access to public services from certain State departments, agencies, and programs, including developing a language access plan;
- require the Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to oversee, monitor, investigate, and enforce certain provisions of law.

Ensuring that state departments, agencies, and programs are accessible to individuals with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency is essential to fostering a just and equitable society. Providing accommodations, such as sign language interpretation, braille, large print, plain language, and other communication supports—along with qualified translators and interpreters—would significantly improve access to public services.

By implementing these measures, state agencies can also meet ADA requirements for effective communication, ensuring that individuals receive the assistance they need without being hindered by language barriers or the availability of a translator.

Our recent experience during and following the Covid-19 pandemic, and now with the uncertainties of federal services due to the massive structural disruptions, layoffs, and funding freezes within federal government agencies, ready and effective access to state agencies and program information is more critical than ever, particularly for persons with disabilities or limited language proficiency.

We urge you to give House Bill 1473 a FAVORABLE Report.