



**Empowering People to Lead Systemic Change**  
The Protection and Advocacy System for the State of Maryland

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**SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**HOUSE BILL 1473**

**State Government—Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency and Individuals with Disabilities**

**April 3, 2025**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is Maryland's Protection & Advocacy agency, mandated to advance the rights of people with disabilities statewide. DRM has been representing people with disabilities in a range of legal matters for nearly 50 years and understands well the challenges faced by our constituency when they are unable to access state agency assistance promptly and effectively because of language barriers. Because all of DRM's clients have disabilities and a number of DRM's clients speak languages other than English, we strongly support House Bill 1473. This bill, if enacted, would require language access for individuals with limited English proficiency and individuals with disabilities.

For many individuals, the process of contacting a government agency, navigating a voicemail system, and getting an actual human being to address their question or concern can be a Sisyphean task, especially if the individual finally does reach a person and cannot communicate with them. Additionally, individuals may lose or be denied benefits or services because they receive time-sensitive communications, such as appeal rights and deadlines, but cannot read them because they are provided in a language or mode that renders them inaccessible to the person.

DRM appreciates that House Bill 1473 takes a flexible approach to communication accessibility, recognizing that individuals with disabilities use various methods of communication. By broadly defining language assistance services to include sign language, Braille, TDD/TT/TTY, large print, plain language, and "other communication accommodations," the bill allows for a wide range of supports and encourages state agencies to take a more understanding and responsive approach. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing and respecting individual communication preferences, increasing the likelihood that people will receive the support they need in a way that works best for them. For these reasons, DRM supports House Bill 1473. Contact: Leslie Seid Margolis at [lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org](mailto:lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org) or 410-370-5730.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Seid Margolis  
Managing Attorney and Policy Counsel