

HB981_LEP Public Services_KennedyKrieger_support_S

Uploaded by: Emily Arneson

Position: FAV

References

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4. A Practical Guide to Implementing the National CLAS Standards. Accessed September 3, 2022. <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/OMH/Downloads/CLAS-Toolkit-12-7-16.pdf>
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HB0981_CC_Martinez_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Madelin Martinez

Position: FAV

House Bill 981
Individuals With Limited English Proficiency - Access to Public Services
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 28th 2024
Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports HB 981, which would require the Department of Disabilities to fully implement certain provisions of law requiring equal access to public services for individuals with limited English proficiency.

For a century, Catholic Charities has provided care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. We accompany Marylanders as they age with dignity, support their pursuit of employment and career advancement, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success, and welcome immigrant neighbors into Maryland communities.

As a leading provider of human services in Maryland, our extensive experience assisting Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals and families underscores the significant barriers created by the lack of language access to essential services. For example, in our efforts to help clients secure emergency shelter, we've encountered situations where calls are abruptly disconnected upon realizing the client's inability to communicate in English with state or local agencies. Moreover, we've observed inconsistencies in interpretation services within various programs resulting in inaccurate or incomplete information exchange and subsequent confusion. Recently, a troubling incident occurred where several clients were initially placed in a shelter, only to be denied access the next day due to language barriers—the shelter lacked bilingual staff and failed to utilize the language line, while the clients did not speak English. This led to confusion and frustration among the clients, highlighting the critical need for effective communication in such situations.

In Maryland, equal access to public services is not just a moral imperative but also a legal right established by federal civil rights law and the state's 2002 Language Access Law.^{1,2} For LEP individuals navigating complex systems, understanding basic paperwork can determine whether critical needs are met. As Maryland's LEP population continues to grow, the passage of HB 981 represents a crucial stride towards equity and inclusion.

For these reasons, Catholic Charities of Baltimore urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 981.

Submitted By: Madelin Martinez, Assistant Director of Advocacy.

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2. Hofstetter J, Mchugh M, O'toole A. A Framework for Language Access Key Features of U.S. State and Local Language Access Laws and Policies.; 2021. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/language-access-2021_final.pdf

HB0981-EEE-FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: FAV



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
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HB0981

March 28, 2024

TO: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 981 – Principal Departments - Individuals with Limited English Proficiency - Access to Public Services

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) supports House Bill (HB) 981.

HB 981 seeks to strengthen protections related to access to public services for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEPs) across many executive departments. By fully implementing provisions to overcome language barriers within executive departments and requiring all future departments established after October 1st, 2024 to comply with these provisions, this bill will promote equitable access to public information and resources for all Maryland families. This would, in turn, promote more thorough integration and self-sufficiency among new residents of the State of Maryland and those who are historically excluded from services and programs due to language barriers. The ability to access emergency information, public benefits, and other critical services quickly and adequately would significantly improve the safety and well-being of LEP families and individuals.

In response to the unique challenges that LEP families face in accessing public services, the City of Baltimore established the Baltimore New American Access Coalition (BNAAC), an ARPA-funded project that provides benefit navigation services to eligible LEP families in Baltimore City. The BNAAC program is managed by the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MIMA), whose mission is to promote community-wellbeing, economic development, and the integration of immigrant communities by identifying needs and opportunities that immigrants bring to our city. Since February 2023, BNAAC has served 569 families and facilitated access to State and Local public benefits for 402 families. When the BNAAC project ends in December 2024, many of these families will be at risk of losing access to public benefits unless additional efforts are made to overcome language barriers.

Moreover, HB 981's intent to fully implement language accessibility provisions across State executive departments is consistent with best practices shared across federal, state, and local governments.

HB 981 represents a crucial step towards ensuring equitable access to public services for all Maryland residents and improving the overall health and well-being of our communities. For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report for HB 981.

2024 HB0981 Testimony Against 2024-03-28.pdf

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: UNF

Honorable Senators

I oppose HB0981.

Why should we spend tax dollars to translate public documents for those who are not proficient in English?

If we continue to provide expensive translators and translations, what is the incentive to become more proficient in English? By not learning English, how can these people become productive members of our State and eventually become citizens?

There were no government agencies available to help my German ancestors when they emigrated here in the nineteenth century. They were eager to become Americans and to learn English. Those newly arrived, got their relatives and neighbors who came before them to help them with the language barrier.

With a looming budget deficit, we cannot continue to spend money we do not have on groups who are probably not even citizens.

Please vote against HB0981.

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HB0981 NO Globalism .pdf

Uploaded by: Suzanne Price

Position: UNF

Please vote no or abstain from voting on bad Bill HB0981, it's just more DEI nonsense.

Suzanne Price
AACo, Maryland