



**MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

March 05, 2024

HB 981

**Maryland Department of Disabilities – Individuals With Limited English Proficiency – Access to
Public Services**

House Health & Government Operations Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of House Bill 981. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 981 requires the Department of Disabilities to fully implement provisions of law ensuring equal access to public services for individuals with limited English proficiency.

Ensuring equal access to public services is a moral imperative rooted in the inherent dignity of every human person. As Catholics, we are called to embrace and uphold the diversity of our communities, recognizing that every individual, regardless of language proficiency, deserves to be treated with respect and afforded the same opportunities for participation in civic life.

For individuals with limited English proficiency, accessing essential public services can often present significant barriers, hindering their ability to fully engage with their communities and exercise their rights as citizens. By fully implementing provisions of law aimed at addressing these disparities, the Department of Disabilities can help bridge these gaps and ensure that all Maryland residents have equitable access to the services and resources they need to thrive.

The Catholic tradition teaches us to prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society. Many individuals with limited English proficiency belong to underserved and disadvantaged communities, facing intersecting barriers to accessing healthcare, education, employment, and other vital services. By actively working to remove language barriers and promote linguistic inclusivity, we demonstrate our commitment to standing in solidarity with those on the margins and advocating for their rights and well-being.

The MCC appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 981.

