



## MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair  
Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Vice Chair  
Ways and Means Committee Members  
FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus  
DATE: February 29, 2024  
RE: HB563 - Election Law - Local Boards of Elections -  
Language-Related Assistance Testimony

### **The MLLC supports HB563 - Election Law - Local Boards of Elections - Language-Related Assistance, 2024**

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB563.

According to census data, more than a million Marylanders speak a language other than English in their homes, with 519,045 Marylanders speaking Spanish in their homes, and more than 214,700 Spanish speakers reporting speaking English less than "Very Well."<sup>1</sup> That means 42% of the Hispanic population in Maryland would benefit from voting materials in Spanish, increasing accessibility to election information and to the democratic process.

HB563 will address the need for access by lowering Maryland's language access threshold, triggering it when at least 2% (but in no instance fewer than 100 individuals) or 4,000 citizens within voting age in a county speak a language other than English, read or understand the English language less than "very well." In counties where the State Board of Elections (SBE) determines need, all election materials would then be translated to each language that meets the threshold in each county, expanding access to voting material for citizens. Most, if not all, counties would be required to provide Spanish translations, while Montgomery County may be required to translate to French, Cantonese, Korean and Amharic. For each designated language, the language-related assistance and materials must include (1) registration and voting notices; (2) election-related forms and instructions; (3) signage at all early voting centers and polling places in designated languages notifying voters that language assistance and telephone interpreters are available; and (4) ballots and other materials or information relating to the electoral process. In the case of an oral or unwritten language, the local board may provide only oral instructions, assistance, or other information relating to the electoral process in the applicable language.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB563.

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<sup>1</sup> [U.S. Census Bureau](#)