

# LANGUAGE ACCESS ACT OF 2025 | HB 1473

SPONSORED BY DELEGATE GABRIEL ACEVERO

## LANGUAGE ACCESS IS A HUMAN RIGHT

Maryland and federal law require certain state agencies, departments, and programs to provide meaningful access to their program, services, and activities to individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) by providing *timely* and *free* language assistance services, like oral interpretation and written translation, from *qualified* interpreters and translators. This includes spoken languages, like Spanish and French, as well as signed languages, like American Sign Language.



## BUT STATE AGENCIES ARE NOT CONSISTENTLY MEETING THESE LEGAL OBLIGATIONS.

When state agencies are not prepared to provide on-demand access to interpretation and translation services in the individual's primary and preferred language, LEP communities experience discrimination and harm, like:

- being turned away from state agency offices;
- unable to apply for safety net services that support low-income individuals and families;
- being told by frontline staff to bring a family member or friend to serve as an interpreter for appointments; and
- wrongful termination of critical benefits for households when letters containing instructions and deadlines are sent in English.

## THESE RIGHTS ARE AT RISK UNDER THE NEW FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION.

On March 1st, through Executive Order 14224, the Trump Administration rescinded the nearly 25 year-old Executive Order 13166, which required federal agencies to provide language assistance services to individuals with LEP. This means that there is now no requirement for federal agencies to be linguistically inclusive. Maryland must move quickly to preserve and strengthen language access protections at the state level.



## HB 1473 STRENGTHENS MARYLAND'S LANGUAGE ACCESS LAW

- Requires state agencies, departments, and programs to establish a language access plan and notify individuals with LEP about their right to free language assistance services. The plan must include a process for individuals to file a language access complaint with the entity.
- Designates the Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs as the oversight, monitoring, investigation and enforcement body for Maryland's language access law
- Requires state agencies, departments, and programs to report annually on their language access plan and budget, language assistance services provided to community members, and language access complaints received

Vote **YES** on **HB 1473** to ensure that the more than 500,000 Marylanders with limited English proficiency and individuals with disabilities have meaningful and equal access to our public services.