

# 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.

In 2020, the Trump administration put forward new regulations that stripped important, long-standing civil rights for individuals with limited English proficiency from a key federal antidiscrimination law, Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act. Although the Biden administration took steps in 2024 to restore and strengthen these protections, these rights are at serious risk of being stripped again under the current Administration.



## 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
- 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
- Provides an annual appropriation to the Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to support their existing work as well as this new role

Vote **YES** on **HB 1473** to ensure that the more than 386,000 Marylanders with limited English proficiency have meaningful and equal access to our public services