



TESTIMONY FOR HB1473
Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency
and Individuals with Disabilities

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Acevero

Committee: Health and Government Operations

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB1473 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Our members are concerned about the enormous share of our state's population affected by communication barriers, limiting understanding of state requirements and access to services. An estimated 400,000 immigrants have limited English proficiency, while people with communication disabilities make up 10 percent of our population. HB1473 would increase the accountability of our state agencies in providing enhanced communication pathways for individuals with limited language access.

Specifically, the bill requires state departments, agencies, and programs to implement language access plans that address the needs of individuals with limited English proficiency and disabilities. These plans must include provisions for translation and interpretation services, as well as accommodations for individuals with disabilities. The Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs will play a crucial role in overseeing, monitoring, investigating, and enforcing the bill's language access provisions within each state agency and department. These entities are to designate a language access compliance program director and develop an implementation plan.

HB1473 seeks to promote equal access to state agencies by addressing language barriers faced by individuals with limited English or communication abilities. By communicating more effectively, we better serve our diverse populations while fostering inclusion. These individuals help support our economy and pay into our tax base. It is only fair that we make our government as accessible as possible to all our residents.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.