



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 11, 2025

House Bill 1473

**State Government - Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals With Limited English Proficiency and Individuals With Disabilities
House Health and Government Operations Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) 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 1473 would alter provisions of law relating to equal access to public services for individuals with limited English proficiency to include individuals with disabilities; establishing certain requirements for equal access to public services for certain State departments, agencies, and programs, including developing a language access plan; requiring the Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to oversee, monitor, investigate, and enforce certain provisions of law.

Ensuring that state departments, agencies, and programs are accessible to individuals with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency is essential to fostering a just and equitable society. Providing accommodations such as sign language interpretation, braille, large print, plain language, and other communication supports—along with qualified translators and interpreters—would significantly improve access to public services. By implementing these measures, state agencies can also meet ADA requirements for effective communication, ensuring that individuals receive the assistance they need without being hindered by language barriers or the availability of a translator.

The ADA mandates that state and local governments (Title II entities) and public-serving businesses (Title III entities) provide equally effective communication for individuals with communication disabilities.¹ Likewise, individuals with limited English proficiency require language access services, including translation and interpretation, to fully engage with public services. This legislation reinforces those obligations by requiring state agencies and programs

¹ <https://www.ada.gov/resources/effective-communication/>

to submit an itemized budget for language assistance services. This would help identify and address gaps in accessibility, ensuring that services are responsive to community needs and that all individuals, regardless of disability or language proficiency, can fully participate in public resources. Rooted in the Catholic call for solidarity, this legislation affirms the inherent dignity of individuals, regardless of language or communication barriers, by ensuring they have the resources necessary to live with greater participation in society.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **HB 1473**.

Thank you for your consideration.