

## Driver's License Knowledge Test Languages

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### Issue

Summarize state law on translation of the knowledge test for a class D driver's license and the recently enacted law expanding language offerings. This report partially updates OLR Report [2022-R-0134](#).

### Summary

Before issuing a youth or adult instruction permit (i.e., learner's permit), the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) requires that applicants take a knowledge test to show that they know the state's motor vehicle laws and rules of the road and have enough understanding of motor vehicles to safely operate. Getting a learner's permit, which allows the holder to drive with supervision, is typically the first step to becoming a licensed driver them ([CGS § 14-36](#), as amended by [PA 23-40](#), § 27).

State law requires that the test be provided in English, Spanish, and any language spoken at home by at least 1% of the state's population (based on the most recent decennial census). For languages falling under this category, the test must be offered in electronic and audio format. The DMV commissioner may also offer it in other formats if he deems it appropriate ([CGS § 14-36\(d\)\(3\)](#), as amended by [PA 23-40](#), § 27). DMV offers tests under this provision in the following languages, according to its [website](#): Albanian, Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, English, French, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

In 2023, the legislature expanded the number of languages in which the test must be offered by requiring DMV to offer the test in at least 26 additional languages that are responsive to the needs of emerging immigrant and refugee populations. DMV has begun offering tests in additional languages and must report to the legislature on the expanded offerings by February 1, 2024.

Applicants who speak a language for which a test is not available may bring and use a non-electronic dictionary to translate the test, as long as it does not contain extra markings, writings, or papers.

## **Expanded Languages**

### ***2023 Law***

This year, the legislature passed a law to expand the knowledge test language offerings and meet the needs of immigrant and refugee populations. Specifically, [PA 23-40](#), § 27, requires that DMV offer the test in at least 26 additional languages that the commissioner determines are responsive to the language needs of emerging immigrant and refugee populations. When selecting the languages in which to offer the test, the commissioner must consult with advocacy and assistance organizations serving immigrants, refugees, or English language learners.

Under the new law, the tests in these expanded languages must be offered in either electronic or written format and may be offered in audio format as the commissioner deems appropriate. Each of these tests must also be reviewed by a fluent speaker of the applicable language.

### ***DMV Implementation***

According to [DMV's website](#), it currently offers written tests pursuant to this provision in the following languages: Amharic Ethiopia, Armenian, Bosnian, Chinese Simplified, Croatian, Dari, German, Greek, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Nepali, Pashto, Persian Farsi, Portuguese Brazil, Punjabi, Romanian, Somali, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, and Urdu. Applicants have the option to request the test in one of these languages and complete it in hard copy.

### ***Legislative Report***

The new law also requires DMV to report to the legislature by February 1, 2024, on the expanded offerings. Specifically, the report must provide:

1. the languages the commissioner determined were responsive to emerging immigrant and refugee populations' needs;
2. the number of requests for each language between April 1, 2023, and January 1, 2024; and
3. recommendations for which of the languages, if any, should be administered in electronic or audio format and the level of funding the department would need in order to do so ([PA 23-40](#), § 28).

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