General Assembly

Committee Bill No. 955

January Session, 2025

LCO No. **6254**

Referred to Committee on GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS

Introduced by:
(GAE)

AN ACT REQUIRING STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND STATE CONTRACTORS TO ENSURE INDIVIDUALS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY ARE ABLE TO ACCESS PUBLIC SERVICES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2025*) (a) As used in this section and sections 2 to 5, inclusive, of this act:

(1) "Limited English proficiency individuals" means individuals whose primary and preferred language is not English and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English.

(2) "Language access" means the provision of services, information and resources in languages other than English to ensure equitable access.

(3) "Interpretation services" means the provision of spoken language and sign language assistance, including in-person interpreters, telephonic interpretation services and video remote interpretation services by a qualified interpreter.

(4) "Translation services" means the provision of written materials, including forms, brochures, web sites and other informational materials, in languages other than English.

(5) "Qualified interpreter" means an individual who is fluent in both English and a target language and has received formal training.

(6) "Covered entity" means any agency, department or organization within the state that receives state or federal funding or otherwise provides public services.

(7) "State contractor" means an entity that has entered into a state contract with a state or quasi-public agency.

(8) "State contract" means a contract (A) between an entity and a state or quasi-public agency, or (B) for the receipt of financial assistance by an entity from the state, including federal funding.

(9) "Subcontractor" means a person who performs work for a state contractor pursuant to a contract for work for the state or a municipality.

(b) Each covered entity as well as each state contractor and subcontractor receiving state or federal funds shall:

(1) Implement policies that ensure meaningful access to their programs and services for limited English proficiency individuals;

(2) Conduct an assessment of the language needs of the communities they serve, including the collection and analysis of demographic data such as the 2020 Census and the American Community Survey estimates, or successive survey, to identify languages spoken by limited English proficiency individuals;

(3) Ensure the availability of translation and interpretation services in languages that reflect the limited English proficiency individuals in the state, including, but not limited to, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Arabic, Italian, Haitian, Hindi, French, Russian and others, based on the

dialects and needs identified based upon the assessment conducted under subdivision (2) of this subsection;

(4) Provide sign language interpretation and other accommodations for individuals with hearing impairments in all public services and programs in their preferred language; and

(5) Ensure that all public-facing materials and communications are written in plain language, making them understandable to a broad audience, including individuals with limited literacy or limited English proficiency individuals.

(c) Each state agency shall develop and implement a language access plan that includes policies for providing meaningful access to limited English proficiency individuals in accordance with the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Any such plan shall (1) provide for staff training to ensure staff members can effectively work with limited English proficiency individuals, including understanding when to use professional interpreters or translation services, (2) establish procedures for identifying limited English proficiency individuals who require language assistance and ensure that all service delivery points are equipped to assist such individuals, including telephone and web-based services, and (3) ensure that limited English proficiency individuals with disabilities have equal access to language and disability-related services, including assistance with interpretation and translation of materials in accessible formats such as braille, audio and assistive technology.

(d) Each state agency shall designate an existing employee as a language access coordinator who will be responsible for implementing language access policies and coordinating services in accordance with the adopted plan of such agency. Such coordinator shall collect and report data on the language needs of the populations they serve, using data from the 2020 Census and American Community Survey estimates, or successive survey, and report such data to the Office of Language Access not later than May first of each year.

(e) Each state agency shall provide publicly available language access plans on the Internet web site of such agency, detailing available language assistance services and the process for requesting such services.

(f) Each state agency shall evaluate and periodically revise written materials and web sites to ensure that they are accessible to people of varying literacy levels, including those with limited English proficiency.

Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2025*) (a) As used in this section:

(1) "Health care provider" means any person employed by or acting on behalf of a health care facility or institution; and

(2) "Health care facility or institution" means a hospital, nursing home, rest home, home health care agency, home health aide agency, emergency medical services organization, assisted living services agency, outpatient surgical facility and an infirmary operated by an educational institution for the care of students enrolled in, and faculty and employees of, such institution.

(b) Each health care facility or institution that receives state or federal funding shall ensure that limited English proficiency individuals seeking health care services from a health care provider in the state receive language assistance to ensure equal access to programs, services and activities, including, but not limited to, providing timely, competent and culturally appropriate language assistance services, including translation of health-related materials and interpretation services prior to, during and after medical appointments.

Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2025*) Each local and regional board of education shall ensure that limited English proficiency individuals who are students in the district of such board and the families of such students receive information and services in their preferred language at all levels of education, from preschool through high school, including, but not limited to, providing interpretation services for limited English

proficiency students and parents during parent-teacher conferences, disciplinary proceedings and other educational activities.

Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2025*) Each constituent unit, as defined in section 10a-1 of the general statutes, shall ensure that limited English proficiency individuals who are students in the institutions of higher education of such constituent unit and the families of such students receive information and services in their preferred language.

Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2025*) (a) There is established an Office of Language Access within the Department of Consumer Protection. The Commissioner of Consumer Protection shall designate an existing employee to serve as the executive director of the Office of Language Access.

(b) The office shall:

(1) Oversee the enforcement of language access policies within state agencies;

(2) Investigate complaints of noncompliance with the provisions of sections 1 to 4, inclusive, of this act, including failure to provide appropriate interpretation or translation services;

(3) Establish a formal process for individuals to request language assistance services; and

(4) Analyze the data collected and submitted by language access coordinators under section 1 of this act to evaluate the need for expanded language assistance services in different regions of the state and adjust language access plans to meet the evolving needs of limited English proficiency communities.

(c) Not later than February 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, the executive director shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters

relating to government administration, human services, public health, higher education and education. Such report shall include a summary of the analysis conducted under subdivision (4) of subsection (b) of this section, the services provided by the office during the preceding year, the results of any investigations conducted under this section during the preceding year and any recommendations for necessary legislation.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	*October 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 2	*October 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 3	*October 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 4	*October 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 5	*October 1, 2025*	New section

Statement of Purpose:

To require the adoption of various policies concerning the offering of translation and interpretation services to ensure that individuals with limited English proficiency have meaningful access to programs and services offered by state and local government agencies, contractors and other entities that receive state funding.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]

Co-Sponsors: SEN. RAHMAN, 4th Dist.; REP. REYES, 75th Dist.
REP. TURCO, 27th Dist.

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