

Date of Hearing: April 29, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Alex Lee, Chair

AB 1242 (Nguyen) – As Amended March 28, 2025

SUBJECT: Language access

SUMMARY: Requires each state department and office within the California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS) to develop and regularly update Language Access Plans (LAPs) and conduct an assessment and survey of the language needs of non-English-speaking and limited-English-speaking individuals, and those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Establishes a Language Access Director within CalHHS to oversee the implementation, community engagement, and agency compliance, and creates a grant program to support community-based organizations in outreach and education. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires every state agency that serves a substantial number of non-English-speaking people and provides materials in English explaining services and provide materials in any non-English language spoken by a substantial number of the public that is served, to also include persons eligible to be served by the agency.
- 2) Revises current state agency survey requirements to require each state agency to conduct an assessment and survey of the language needs of non-English-speaking and limited-English-speaking people and develop and update an implementation plan.
- 3) Requires a state agency to utilize specified information in conducting the assessment and survey, and in developing and updating the implementation plan described in 2) above, including:
 - a) The most recent census data from the United States (U.S.) Census Bureau, or recent data from any other relevant data databases, including, but not limited to, both of the following:
 - i) English Learner Data, available on the DataQuest reporting system provided by the State Department of Education; and,
 - ii) Language Microdata for California, and any other language database that is based on the census and includes limited-English-proficiency (LEP) by ZIP Code and census tract, available on the Demographic Research Unit Data Portal provided by the Department of Finance.
 - b) Community-level input from various mechanisms, including focus groups, roundtables, and advisory bodies, especially during times of emergencies; and,
 - c) Any relevant factors other than those described in a) and b) above, including levels of linguistic isolation and percentages of LEP within each language group.
- 4) Revises existing survey requirements to require each state agency to conduct an assessment of language needs and language survey of each its statewide and local offices every two years to determine the number of non-English-speaking or limited-English-speaking people

served or eligible to be served by each statewide and local office broken down by native language based on any of the information described in 2) above, to assess the language needs in each of its statewide or local offices service area.

- 5) Revises provisions to require the state agency's assessment pursuant to 4) above, to the include limited-English-speaking people and people eligible to be served by each statewide and local office based on the information described in 3) above, to assess the language needs of non-English-speaking or limited-English-speaking populations in each statewide or local offices service area.
- 6) Includes contracted video interpretation services serving the language needs of people served by the agency as an available option in the assessment pursuant to 4) above, when determining whether the use of other available options in addition to qualified bilingual persons in public contact positions is serving the language needs of the people served by the agency.
- 7) Authorizes an agency to rely on its most recent survey and language assessment data in developing its implementation plan.
- 8) Requires the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR), when reviewing the results of language need surveys and implementation plans, to also review language assessments. Adds the following elements to CalHR's existing biannual report to the Legislature:
 - a) The report shall identify significant problems or deficiencies and propose solutions where warranted;
 - b) The report shall include each state agency's language assessment, survey results, and implementation plan; and,
 - c) The report shall be submitted in accordance with existing law.
- 9) Establishes within CalHHS, the Language Access Division (LAD) to provide critical oversight, accountability, and coordination across various state departments and agencies to ensure individuals with LEP and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing have meaningful access to government programs and services.
- 10) Requires the LAD to do all of the following:
 - a) Lead the implementation, monitoring, and periodic updating of LAPs within CalHHS, including a LAP for each department and office within CalHHS and CalHHS' LAP Guidance Document;
 - b) Coordinate with the language access coordinators from the various departments and offices within CalHHS to implement each departments' and offices' LAP;
 - c) Increase the provision of language assistance services, including translation and interpreter services, through various options, which may include, but are not limited to, hiring bilingual staff and contracting with community-based organizations and third-party vendors;

- d) Ensure the use of qualified interpreters and qualified translators for any language assistance provided to persons with LEP or persons who are deaf or hard of hearing;
- e) Ensure each LAP, as required by 13) below, includes all of the following:
 - i) Methods to identify individuals with LEP who require language assistance, including both of the following:
 - 1. A demographic assessment of the department's service population; and,
 - 2. An effective system of recording and utilizing spoken, sign, and written language preferences, including processes to identify the correct linguistic variant.
 - ii) Language assistance measures and information about the ways that language assistance will be provided, including all of the following:
 - 1. The types of services available, including: how a department or office will provide free sign language interpretation and oral interpretation services in a language and linguistic variant, upon request, for all public contacts, including sight translation of vital documents pursuant to CalHHS' LAP Guidance Document; and how the department or office will use the safe harbor provisions as described the Federal Register to determine the languages that a vital document is required to be translated into.
 - 2. How staff can obtain those services;
 - 3. How to respond to an individual who requires language assistance, including via telephone, written communication, and in-person contact; and,
 - 4. Ensuring the competency of qualified interpreters and qualified translators.
 - iii) Training for staff to ensure they know about policies, procedures, and best practices related to the provision of meaningful language access and, ensuring staff who have contact with the public are trained to work effectively with in-person, video, and telephone interpreters;
 - iv) Notice for individuals containing the language services that are available at no cost for an individual with LEP or, to the extent that a service area exists, who reside in its service area and are eligible for services; and,
 - v) A mechanism to monitor the implementation of the plan and update the plan every two years. Requires the update to include whether new documents, programs, services, and activities are required to be made accessible for individuals with LEP and who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- f) Collect data from the various departments and offices within CalHHS to create the report required in 13) below.
- g) Ensure a document is translated if an individual with LEP submits a written request to CalHHS, or any of its departments or offices, that the document be translated into the individual's preferred language;

- h) Commencing no later than January 1, 2027, engage communities with LEP and deaf and hard of hearing communities to assist in expanding access to the programs and services provided by CalHHS and the various departments and offices within the agency, including, but not limited to, by doing all of the following:
 - i) Conducting targeted outreach to communities who are LEP or deaf and hard of hearing to solicit advice on policies and practices affecting individuals who are eligible for services and benefits from departments' and offices' within CalHHS and provide input and feedback to the agency about its LAP and policies;
 - ii) Marketing and promoting those programs and services in a variety of languages to the general public and LEP communities; and,
 - iii) Establishing a grant program lasting at least two years to provide funding for community-based organizations working with communities with LEP to provide outreach and education to them and to provide feedback to CalHHS regarding its LAP and policies; and,
 - i) Develop an LAP Guidance Document to support the various departments and offices within CalHHS in their development of an LAP.
- 11) Authorizes the LAD to consider the following when reviewing a plan for updates:
- a) Changed demographics;
 - b) An analysis of internal and external data;
 - c) Responses to new and unexpected language needs;
 - d) Assessment and measures of client satisfaction; and,
 - e) Capacity-building efforts regarding funding, staffing, and training.
- 12) Requires each department and office within CalHHS to do both of the following: develop a LAP; and, delegate a coordinator to work with the LAD to achieve the purposes of this division.
- 13) Requires, commencing November 1, 2027, and every other year thereafter, CalHHS, under the oversight of the LAD, to submit a report for the two prior fiscal years to the Legislature and the relevant policy committees containing the information described below. Requires the report to provide information by fiscal year, including:
- a) Challenges encountered while implementing the various LAPs;
 - b) The LAD's efforts to address the problems it encountered, if any;
 - c) Lessons learned and best practices;
 - d) The number and percentage of individuals with LEP and who are deaf or hard of hearing who use each department's or office's services, listed by language other than English, in comparison to the estimated population with LEP and who are deaf or hard of hearing

who are eligible for the department's or office's services, including a description of the methodology or data collection system used to make this determination;

- e) The name and contact information for each language access coordinator;
 - f) A list of ongoing employee development and training strategies to maintain well-trained multilingual employees and general staff, including a description of quality control protocols for multilingual employees; and, language service protocols for individuals with LEP, or who are deaf or hard of hearing, who are in crisis situations;
 - g) A list of goals for the upcoming year and, except for the first year of the report, an assessment of each department's and office's success at meeting the prior year's goals;
 - h) The number of translation requests received and provided, the languages used to translate materials, and which materials were translated and completed during the prior fiscal year; and,
 - i) The number of interpretation requests received and the number of interpretation services provided, by language, including services provided in person, by video, and via telephone, for services provided by department and office staff, as well as by contracted vendors.
- 14) Requires the report to be submitted in accordance with state law pursuant to 11) below.
- 15) Requires CalHHS, from funds appropriated in the Budget Act of 2023, to allocate sufficient funds to implement and carry out the provisions of this bill, including the requirement for the departments and offices within the agency to assign a language access coordinator.
- 16) Defines, for the purposes of these provisions, the following terms to have the following meaning:
- a) "Interpretation" to mean the process of understanding and analyzing a spoken or signed message and re-expressing that message faithfully, accurately, and objectively in another language, taking the cultural and social context into account.
 - b) "Limited English proficiency" or LEP to mean individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English, and are eligible to receive language assistance with respect to services, benefits, or challenges encountered.
 - c) "Qualified interpreter" to mean a person who satisfies all of the following:
 - i) Demonstrated proficiency in both English and the target language;
 - ii) Knowledge in both English and the target language of health care and other appropriate terminology and concepts relevant to health care or social services delivery systems;
 - iii) Adherence to generally accepted interpreter ethics and principles, including, but not limited to, client confidentiality; and,

- iv) Specifies that a “qualified interpreter” does not mean a person who provides oral interpretation using a machine or done online, including, but not limited to, providing interpretation using an online, machine-based interpreter service or artificial intelligence, unless a person reviews and appropriately corrects the interpretation before the final interpretation reaches its intended audience.
 - d) “Qualified translator” to mean a person who satisfies all of the following:
 - i) Demonstrated proficiency in both English and the target language;
 - ii) Knowledge in both English and the target language of health care and other appropriate terminology and concepts relevant to health care or social services delivery systems;
 - iii) Adherence to generally accepted translator ethics and principles, including, but not limited to, client confidentiality; and,
 - iv) Specifies that a “qualified translator” does not mean a person who makes a translation using a machine or done online, including, but not limited to, making a translation using an online, machine-based translation service or artificial intelligence, unless the person reviews and appropriately revises the translation before the final translation reaches its intended audience.
 - e) “Translation” as the conversion of written text into the corresponding written text in a different language, taking cultural and social context into account. Provides that “translation” does not include the conversion of written text into the corresponding written text in a different language made by a machine or done online, including, but not limited to, through the use of an online, machine-based translation service or artificial intelligence, unless a qualified translator reviews and appropriately revises the translation before the final translation reaches its intended audience.
- 17) Makes the following legislative findings and declarations: this act aligns with Executive Order No. N-16-22, which committed to strengthening equity and language access, and the California Health and Human Services Agency’s Language Access Plan Guidance Document.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes CalHHS, which consists of the following departments and offices (hereinafter “departments”): Aging, Child Support Services, Community Services and Development, Developmental Services (DDS), Health Care Access and Information, Health Care Services, Managed Health Care, Public Health (CDPH), Rehabilitation, Social Services (CDSS), State Hospitals, the Center for Data Insights and Innovation, the Emergency Medical Services Authority, the Office of Technology and Solutions Integration, the Office of Law Enforcement Support, the Office of the Surgeon General, the Office of Youth and Community Restoration, and the State Council on Developmental Disabilities. (Government Code [GOV] § 12803, 12806)
- 2) Requires, under the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act (Act), each state agency, defined as every state office, department, division, bureau, board, or commission directly

involved in the furnishing of information or the rendering of services to the public that includes a substantial number of people with LEP, to employ a sufficient number of qualified bilingual persons in public contact positions. Defines “public contact position” as a position determined by the agency to be one, which emphasizes the ability to meet, contact, and deal with the public in the performance of the agency’s functions. Allows state agencies to contract for telephone-based interpretation services in addition to employing qualified bilingual persons in public contact positions. (GOV § 7292, 7297, 7299.1)

- 3) Requires any materials explaining services available to the public to be translated into any non-English language spoken by a substantial number of people with LEP served by the agency. Defines substantial number people with LEP as members of a group who compromise 5% or more of the people served statewide or any local office or facility of a state agency. (GOV § 7295, 7295.2)
- 4) Requires every state agency which serves a substantial number of non-English-speaking people and which provides materials in English explaining services to also provide the same type of materials in any non-English language spoken by a substantial number of the public served by the agency. (GOV § 7295.2)
- 5) Requires, whenever notice of the availability of materials explaining services available is given, orally or in writing, notice to be given in English and in the non-English language into which any materials have been translated. (GOV § 7295.2)
- 6) Provides that 4) and 5) above, are not be interpreted to require verbatim translations of any materials provided in English by a state agency. (GOV § 7295.2)
- 7) Requires whenever a state agency finds that any of factors listed in both a) and c) or b) and c) below exist, the state agency to distribute the applicable written materials in the appropriate non-English language through its statewide and local offices or facilities to non-English-speaking persons, or, authorizes as an alternative, the state agency to elect to furnish translation aids, translation guides, or provide assistance, through use of a qualified bilingual person, at its statewide and local offices or facilities in completing English forms or questionnaires and in understanding English forms, letters, or notices:
 - a) The written materials, whether forms, applications, questionnaires, letters, or notices solicit or require the furnishing of information from an individual or provide that individual with information;
 - b) The information solicited, required, or furnished affects or may affect the individual’s rights, duties, or privileges with regard to that agency’s services or benefits; or,
 - c) The statewide or local office or facility of the agency with which the individual is dealing, serves a substantial number of non-English-speaking persons. (GOV § 7295.4)
- 8) Defines a “substantial number of non-English-speaking people” as members of a group who either do not speak English, or who are unable to effectively communicate in English because it is not their native language, and who comprise 5% or more of the people served by the statewide or any local office or facility of a state agency. (GOV § 7296.2)

- 9) Requires each state agency to conduct a language survey and develop and update an implementation plan, as specified. (GOV § 7299.4)
- 10) Requires CalHR to review the results of the surveys and implementation plans required to be made by 6) above, and to compile this data, and provide a report to the Legislature every two years. Requires the report to identify significant problems or deficiencies and propose solutions where warranted. (GOV § 7299.6)
- 11) Requires any report required or requested by law, or identified in the Legislative Analyst's Supplemental Report of the Budget Act, to be submitted by a state or local agency to a committee of the Legislature or the Members of either house of the Legislature generally, shall instead be submitted as a printed copy to the Secretary of the Senate, as an electronic copy to the Chief Clerk of the Assembly, and as an electronic or printed copy to the Legislative Counsel. Requires each report to include a summary of its contents, not to exceed one page in length. Requires if the report is submitted by a state agency, that agency to also provide an electronic copy of the summary directly to each member of the appropriate house or houses of the Legislature. Requires notice of receipt of the report to be recorded in the journal of the appropriate house or houses of the Legislature by the secretary or clerk of that house, as provided. (GOV § 9795)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown, this bill has not been analyzed by a fiscal committee.

COMMENTS:

Background: *Limited English Proficiency in California.* California is one of the most linguistically diverse states in the U.S., with a significant proportion of its population speaking languages other than English at home. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, from 2018 to 2022, about 44% of California residents older than five years of age spoke a language other than English at home and 17.1% spoke English less than very well. Specifically, 28.2% spoke only Spanish at home, and of this group, 38.2% spoke English less than very well; 9.9% spoke a language from Asia and the Pacific Islands such as Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Korean, and 4.6% spoke English less than very well; and, 1.1% spoke other languages (200+), including over 100 indigenous languages.

Federal and State Anti-Discrimination Law. On the national level, Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs receiving federal assistance. The U.S. Supreme Court case *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) clarified that national origin discrimination includes a person's LEP. President Clinton issued Executive Order (EO) 13166 in 2000 further requiring that organizations receiving federal assistance must ensure meaningful access to their programs for individuals with LEP.

The "safe harbor" provisions outlined in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' guidance published in Volume 68 of the Federal Register provide a clear framework for determining when federal funding recipients should translate written materials to ensure meaningful access for individuals with LEP. These provisions are not strict mandates, but rather practical benchmarks that, if followed, offer strong evidence of compliance with Title IV of the Civil Rights Act.

In California, the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act became law in 1973 to ensure that individuals who do not speak English or with LEP can access public services without language

being a barrier. Under the Act, any state or local agency that serves a “substantial number” of non-English-speaking people, defined as 5% or more of the population served, must take specific steps to eliminate language barriers. This includes hiring bilingual staff in public-facing roles and translating written materials that explain programs, services, or benefits into the languages spoken by the communities they serve. For example, the Department of Motor Vehicles’ offices serving the Koreatown of Los Angeles ensure language accessibility by offering translated documents in Spanish and Korean and employing bilingual staff who can assist individuals in those languages.

To ensure agencies are meeting these obligations, the Act requires them to conduct language surveys every two years. These surveys assess the language needs of the populations served and are used to develop implementation plans that guide how agencies provide language access. CalHR reviews these surveys and implementation plans, identifies areas of non-compliance, and reports findings and recommendations to the Legislature. The Act recognizes California’s linguistic diversity and affirms the right of all residents to meaningful participation in government programs and services.

This bill expands existing requirements under the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act by requiring all state agencies that serve a substantial number of non-English-speaking individuals to provide translated materials not only to those currently in need, but also to those eligible for services. To ensure services meet the actual language needs of California’s diverse communities, *this bill* requires state agencies to conduct comprehensive language needs assessments and surveys every two years. These assessments must use a combination of data sources, including U.S. Census data, educational language databases, and community-level input, and must be conducted separately for each local and statewide office. *This bill* requires agencies to use this data to develop and regularly update LAPs, detailing how they will provide interpreter and translation services, train staff, and ensure public awareness of available language assistance. *This bill* requires departments and offices within CalHHS to consider how they will use safe harbor provisions to determine the languages that a vital document is to be translated into.

Impacts of Language Barriers. Language barriers can have wide-ranging impacts on individuals trying to access health and social services, particularly those who are LEP or deaf and hard of hearing. When individuals cannot understand or be understood by health and social services providers due to language barriers, their ability to access timely, appropriate, and equitable care is significantly compromised. In public assistance programs, language barriers can prevent people from fully understanding their rights, the programs they may qualify for, and how to apply or comply with requirements. This can lead to underutilization of essential programs such as food assistance, childcare subsidies, and housing support, even among individuals who are eligible. For example, LEP applicants for CalFresh frequently report difficulties navigating the application process due to inadequate language support. Language barriers can also cause procedural complications such as incomplete paperwork, missed deadlines, or misunderstandings that result in benefits being denied, delayed, or discontinued.

For patients in healthcare settings, this can result in misdiagnoses, medication errors, poor adherence to treatment plans, and avoidable hospitalizations. LEP individuals are more likely to report dissatisfaction with care, to miss follow-up appointments, and to delay seeking medical attention until health issues become urgent or life-threatening. LEP individuals are also less likely to have health insurance, visit a doctor, or receive preventive care. These barriers disproportionately affect immigrants, refugees, and low-income communities, exacerbating

existing disparities in health outcomes and economic security. They also place added strain on frontline staff and public agencies, which may face increased workloads due to communication errors, complaints, and preventable crises.

Language Access Policy. In 2021, Governor Newsom introduced equity-focused initiatives through the 2021-22 state budget, including a new LAP framework. This initiative provided a one-time allocation of \$20 million to support the development and implementation of a comprehensive statewide framework to improve language access. The framework addressed key areas such as legal compliance, operational protocols of translation and interpretation, bilingual staffing needs, and strategies for community engagement.

On September 13, 2022, Governor Newsom reinforced this commitment by issuing EO N-16-22, which highlighted the state's investments to improve language access across government services. The EO directed CalHHS to develop formal recommendations to enhance language and communication access to state programs and services, with a deadline of September 30, 2023.

On May 22, 2023, CalHHS formally adopted a Language Access Policy and issued a directive to department directors outlining requirements for developing department-level LAPs—regardless of a department's funding sources. Each department's LAP is required to:

- 1) Align with the U.S. Department of Justice's 2022 guidance on Title IV of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits national origin discrimination affecting individuals with LEP, as well as any applicable guidance from relevant federal funding agencies;
- 2) Include an analysis to determine reasonable steps for ensuring meaningful access for LEP individuals. This analysis must consider the number and frequency of LEP contacts, the nature and importance of the service or program, and the available resources and costs associated with providing language services;
- 3) Identify and address all applicable language access legal requirements specific to each department and its programs. Departments must also evaluate whether a Title VI analysis requires language services beyond those already mandated by state law or program regulations;
- 4) Submit draft LAPs to CalHHS by December 1, 2023, and update them at least every two years; and,
- 5) Make public the final, public-facing LAP on the department or office's website by no later than June 1, 2024.

The CalHHS policy also established minimum standards that all departments and offices must meet or exceed in their LAPs:

- *Interpretation Services.* Departments must provide free sign language interpretation and oral interpretation in any spoken language upon request for all public interactions, including sight translation or vital documents. Full implementation was required by January 29, 2024;
- *Translation Services.* All vital documents intended for statewide use, including essential public-facing website content, must be translated into at least the top five threshold languages spoken by LEP individuals in California based on the most recent Census data. As of now,

these are Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Korean. Vital documents include critical outreach materials, applications, eligibility and rights notices, emergency communications, and hearing notifications. Departments must identify which materials are considered “vital” in their LAPs, in accordance with CalHHS guidance;

- *Essential Website Content.* Departments must translate basic introductory web content and include non-English language taglines and ASL video advisories about the availability of free interpretation and translation services. This essential content must be made available in the top five threshold languages and in ASL video format. Departments were required to complete by June 1, 2024; and,
- *Language Threshold Review.* The CalHHS Language Access Workgroup must reassess the list of threshold languages every two years, starting one year after the policy’s adoption, and consider expanding the number of supported languages.

To support implementation, the policy memo indicated that the CalHHS Language Access Workgroup would provide guidance to departments in developing their LAPs, and CDSS would administer additional funding for interpretation and translation services.

Currently, each department is required to appoint a language access coordinator as a part of the directive from CalHHS. Depending on the department’s size, more than one person may be needed to implement the department-level LAPs. *This bill* establishes a Language Access Director position responsible for overseeing the development, implementation, monitoring, and regular updates of LAPs across all departments and offices within CalHHS. *This bill* establishes a new Language Access Division (LAD) within CalHHS to provide oversight, coordination, and technical assistance across departments. The LAD is tasked with leading the development and implementation of LAPs, ensuring the use of qualified interpreters and translators, coordinating community engagement, and collecting statewide data on language access. Under *this bill*, starting in 2027, requires CalHHS’ LAD to submit biennial reports to the Legislature detailing language access efforts, challenges, usage rates, staff training, and translation and interpretation services provided.

This bill further requires the LAD to actively engage communities with LEP and those who are deaf or hard of hearing to help improve access to CalHHS programs and services. This includes conducting targeted outreach to gather input and feedback, promoting programs and services in multiple languages, and establishing a grant program to fund community-based organizations. These organizations would support outreach and education efforts within LEP communities and provide ongoing feedback to CalHHS on its LAPs and related policies.

This bill specifies that CalHHS is required to use funds appropriated in the 2023 Budget Act to ensure adequate funding is allocated to implement the provisions of the bill.

Federal Actions. On March 1, 2025, President Donald Trump signed EO 14224, designating English as the official language of the U.S.—a first in the nation’s history. This order rescinds EO 13166, issued in 2000 by President Bill Clinton, which had required that federal agencies and recipients of federal funding provide language assistance to individuals with LEP.

While the new order does not compel agencies to eliminate existing multilingual services, it removes the federal requirement to offer such assistance. Agencies now have the discretion to decide whether to continue providing documents and services in languages other than English.

The EO's impact will largely depend on how individual agencies choose to implement or modify their language services in the absence of a federal requirement.

Author's Statement: According to the Author, "For the nearly 6.4 million Californians with limited English proficiency, language barriers pose a significant challenge to their ability to have meaningful access to quality health care coverage and services. [This bill] will close important gaps for those seeking a broad spectrum of health and social services, save the state millions in avoidable costs, bolster the state's ability to meet statutory language requirements, and most importantly, advancing health equity for millions of Californians."

Equity Implications: *This bill* seeks to address longstanding language barriers that have prevented individuals with LEP and those who are deaf or hard of hearing from fully accessing public health and social services in California. By strengthening language access requirements, establishing a centralized oversight structure, and mandating the development of development-led LAPs, this bill may move the state closer to ensuring that all Californians—regardless of the language they speak or their ability to hear—can access vital services and information.

Language barriers disproportionately impact low-income, immigrant, and historically marginalized communities, contributing to disparities in health outcomes, economic stability, and public participation. LEP individuals are more likely to experience difficulties in navigating health systems, applying for benefits, or understanding their legal rights, which can result in delayed care, loss of benefits, or missed opportunities for support. These inequities are further exacerbated during public health emergencies or crises, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic when critical information was not made available in many indigenous or non-written languages.

By requiring agencies to translate vital documents, provide free interpretation services, and ensure that language access policies are regularly updated and informed by community input, *this bill* seeks to promote procedural equity and accountability. The establishment of a Language Access Director and a grant program to support community-based organizations further enhances equity by empowering trusted, culturally competent partners to help bridge gaps between the government and underserved communities.

Double referral: This bill was previously heard in the Assembly Health Committee on April 22, 2025, and was approved on a 16-0 vote.

RELATED AND PRIOR LEGISLATION:

SB 1016 (Gonzalez), Chapter 873, Statutes of 2024, required CDPH, whenever collecting demographic data as to the ancestry or ethnic origin of California residents for specified reports, to use separate collection and tabulation categories for each major Latino group, Mesoamerican Indigenous nation, and Mesoamerican Indigenous language group, as specified.

SB 1078 (Min) of 2024, would have established the Office of Language Access within CalHHS to lead the development, monitoring, and updating of state department LAPs, maintain a website with language access information and resources, and submit a report to the Legislature on language access issues within CalHHS departments. *SB 1078 was held on the Assembly Committee on Appropriations suspense file.*

AB 2155 (Ting) of 2024, would have established the Bilingual-Oriented Social Equity Services (BOSES) Grant Program within CDSS to distribute funding to nonprofit community-based

organizations (CBOs) to provide a pay differential to direct service professionals who communicate in a language or medium other than English as part of their job duties. *AB 2155 was held on the Assembly Committee on Appropriations suspense file.*

SB 101 (Skinner), Chapter 12, Statutes of 2023, authorized nonprofits or CBOs to request additional funds to provide a pay differential of up to \$1,000 each year to each direct service professional whose primary job responsibilities include communicating in a language or medium other than English.

SB 435 (Gonzalez) of 2023, would have required CDSS, in the course of collecting demographic data as to the ancestry or ethnic origin of California residents for any report on the CalFresh program, to use separate collection categories and tabulations for each major Latino group, Mesoamerican Indigenous nation, and Mesoamerican Indigenous language, as specified. *SB 435 was vetoed by Governor Newsom.*

AB 1084 (Nguyen) of 2023, would have established the BOSES Grant Program within CDSS to distribute funding to nonprofit CBOs to provide a pay differential to direct service professionals who communicate in a language or medium other than English as part of their job duties. *AB 1084 was held on the Assembly Committee on Appropriations suspense file.*

SB 17 (Pan) of 2022, would have established the Racial Equity Commission (REC) within the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to evaluate and recommend strategies for advancing racial equity across state agencies and departments. The REC would have developed a statewide Racial Equity Framework for the state, offer technical assistance to departments and local governments, engage in community outreach via quarterly stakeholder meetings, and publish annual reports on racial disparities in the state and recommendations to reduce such disparities. *SB 17 was ordered to the Assembly inactive file.*

AB 136 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 76, Statutes of 2021, provided for the statutory changes necessary to enact developmental-services-related provisions of the 2021 Budget Act. Included provisions related to language access and required DDS to establish and implement a system that promotes equity in access to services for consumers by providing a pay differential to direct service professionals who can communicate in a language or medium other than English.

AB 135 (Committee on Budget) Chapter 85, Statutes of 2021, required, among other things, that CDSS administer an enhanced language access and cultural competency initiative for individuals with developmental disabilities and their caregivers that includes identification of vital documents and internet content for translation, regular and periodic language needs assessments to determine threshold languages for translation, and coordinating and streamlining of interpretation and translation services.

AB 1531 (Salas) of 2019, would have lowered the calculation, from 5% to 3%, for determining the threshold languages for a state agency. *AB 1531 was held on the Assembly Committee on Appropriations suspense file.*

AB 2253 (Ting), Chapter 469, Statutes of 2014, made substantive changes to the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act, including requiring a state agency subject to the Act to translate and make accessible on the homepage if its internet website, forms, and processes for submitting complaints of alleged violations of the Act by July 1, 2015. Required that the forms and

processes be translated into all languages spoken by a substantial number of non-English speaking people served by the state agency, among other things.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Asian Health Services (UNREG) (Co-Sponsor)
Asian Resources, INC (Co-Sponsor)
Center for Asian Americans in Action (Co-Sponsor)
Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, INC. (OCAPICA) (Co-Sponsor)
Regional Pacific Islander Taskforce (Co-Sponsor)
A.B.L.E Community Development Foundation
AAPI Equity Alliance
AARP
ACC Senior Services
Access California
Active San Gabriel Valley
API Equality-LA
API Forward Movement
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Southern California
Asian Americans for Community Involvement
Asian Immigrant Women Advocates
Asian Pacific Fund
Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs Association (APAPA)
Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership
Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership (APPEAL)
Asian Resources, INC.
Association for Chinese Families of the Disabled
Buen Vecino
California Healthy Nail Salons Collaborative
California LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network
California Pan - Ethnic Health Network
California Rural Legal Assistance, INC.
California State Council of Service Employees International Union (SEIU California)
Central Valley Pacific Islander Alliance
Children Now
Chinatown Community Development Center
Chinese American Council of Sacramento
Chinese Culture Foundation of San Francisco
Chinese for Affirmative Action/AACRE
Clinica Monseñor Oscar A. Romero
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County (CCALAC)
Community Health Initiative of Orange County
Community Legal Aid Socal
Community Youth Center of San Francisco
Courage California

CPCA Advocates, Subsidiary of the California Primary Care Association
DeafHope
Disability Rights California
Diversity in Health Training Institute
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC) Fiscally Sponsored by Community Partners
F.O.U. Movement
Hawaii Daughters Guild
Healthy Contra Costa
Healthy House Within a Match Coalition
Hmong Innovating Politics
Initiate Justice
Korean Community Center of the East Bay
Korean Community Services
Kutturan Chamoru Foundation
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California
Le Gafa
Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles
Little Tokyo Service Center
Marshallese Youth of Orange County (MYOC)
My Sister's House CA
National Pacific Islander Education Network
NICOS Chinese Health Coalition
North East Medical Services (NEMS)
Northeast Valley Health Corporation
Nourish California
Oakland Asian Cultural Center
OC Action
Omid Multicultural Institute for Development
Orange County Herald Center
Pacific Asian Counseling Services
Pacific Islander Collective San Diego
Pacific Islander Health Partnership
Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition
Richmond Area Multi-Services, INC.
San Francisco Community Health Center
South Asian Network
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Southern California Pacific Islander Community Response Team (SoCal PICRT)
Thai Community Development Center
The Black Alliance for Just Immigration
The Cambodian Family
The Children's Partnership
The Fresno Center
The Young S.A.M.O.A.
United Latino Voices of Contra Costa County
Vision Y Compromiso (UNREG)
Vital Access Care Foundation
Western Center on Law & Poverty, INC.

Opposition

None on file.

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