

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6477

AN ACT REQUIRING A PLAN FOR THE TRANSLATION AND REVIEW OF ALL
FORMS AND APPLICATIONS REQUIRED TO ACCESS STATE AGENCY

Title: SERVICES OR BENEFITS BY LIMITED-ENGLISH PROFICIENT INDIVIDUALS.

Vote Date: 3/26/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/21/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

For individuals in the state to receive the services and benefits provided by the executive branch, they are required to complete electronic or paper applications or forms. Currently these forms and applications are available in English but are not always available in other commonly spoke languages. Proponents of the bill claim this creates a barrier for individuals with limited English proficiency to access these benefits and services. This bill seeks to require the Commissioner of Administrative Services to develop a plan for the translation and review of certain forms and applications into the twelve most commonly spoke languages using data provided by the United States Census Bureau. It additionally would require state agencies to adopt and implement this legislation and appoint a language access coordinator. This bill would help promote inclusion in the government process and get more citizens engaged in the civic process.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Michelle Gilman, Commissioner, Department of Administrative Services (DAS):

Commissioner Gilman shares her appreciation for the bill and its intentions. However, she expresses concern that DAS is not well suited to develop and implement this legislation. She says that DAS has a limited role in translation services, with the services they do provide being to ensure "that our websites comply with federal accessibility standards." Additionally, she states that the state already recommends that state agencies adopt the enterprise machine translation service to translate critical content into 8 commonly spoken languages. The commissioner suggests that Connecticut's Chief Equity and Opportunity Officer is in a

better position to develop and implement such a plan. She also recommends that the due date for the plan be pushed back and that the requirement which seeks the revision of the plan every two years be removed from the bill.

Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of The State, Office of The Secretary of The State:

Secretary Stephanie Thomas is in support of this bill and states translation is one of the largest barriers for voters in the state. However, she states that under the current appropriations, her office would not be able to undertake the changes outlined in this legislation.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Megan Baker, Lead AAPI Policy Analyst, CWCSEO: Megan baker is in support of this bill and says that language access is critical for individuals to access and understand their human rights and responsibilities. She believes that making sure people can understand state agency documents also has economic and social benefits. She claims that this bill reduces miscommunications, medical errors, and legal disputes which in turn reduce overall costs. She also believes that accessible information results in better education, medical, and economic outcomes which benefit the whole state. Finally, she states that being aligned with the federal government ensures eligibility for federal funding and grants.

Jason Rojas, State Representative 9th district and House Majority Leader, Connecticut

General Assembly: Representative Rojas states that 41 percent of the foreign-born residents of the state are classified as limited English-proficient (LEP) which means that they struggle to read, write, speak, and understand English. He says this makes it difficult for them to fully participate in the communities that they live in. Additionally, he states that there is no uniform standard of making things accessible for people who are LEP which makes accessing benefits like Medicare and housing assistance very difficult.

Steven Hernández, Executive Director, ConnCan: Steven Hernández is in support and says this bill ensures that limited English-proficient residents of the state have access to connect with essential resources that the state provides. He states that is crucial to the future success of Connecticut. Additionally, he states that this bill fosters community, inclusivity, and equity.

Luis Ortiz, Director of Community Engagement, ConnCan: Luis Ortiz is in support of this bill and states when individuals have access to information in their preferred languages everyone will benefit. He says that familial engagement in a student's education has been shown to improve a student's performance. He adds that if parents are able to interact with school documents in their preferred language and help in the decision-making process, better student outcomes are possible. Mr. Ortiz also believes that being able to view critical health information in multiple languages ensures that the correct treatment can be given in potentially life-threatening medical emergencies. Additionally, he states that eliminating language barriers allows businesses to thrive and promotes entrepreneurship and economic mobility which in turn grows the economy. Finally, he says when people understand their rights, obligations, and the resources available to them, "they are more likely to engage in civic life, pay taxes, and contribute to the community."

Carol Rizzolo, Retired Physician's Assistant, CT Shoreline Indivisible: Carol Rizzolo is in support of this bill and states that we need to be as inclusive as possible when it comes to the languages we use so that every resident in CT can have an understanding of what we are reading and signing. As a retired physician's assistant, she expresses knowledge about how crucial it is to have an accurate translation of the services that are available.

Doris Maldonado Mendez, American Academy of Pediatrics: Doris Maldonado Mendez is in support of the bill and states this bill will give people who are limited English-proficient "meaningful access to programs and services offered by state and local government agencies." She states that information access and language access is a crucial part to ensuring that all individuals understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities. Finally, she shares instances in which other states have passed similar legislation and have found success with it.

The following testimonies expressed general support of the bill:

Geraldo Reyes, State Representative 75th District, Connecticut General Assembly

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

The following testimonies expressed general opposition to the bill:

Linda Dalessio

Reported by: Nicholas D'Angelo

Date: 04/03/2025