

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4985

To improve access to Federal services by individuals with limited English proficiency, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 15, 2026

Mr. KIM (for himself, Ms. HIRONO, and Mrs. GILLIBRAND) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

A BILL

To improve access to Federal services by individuals with limited English proficiency, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Language Access for
5 All Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. IMPROVING ACCESS TO FEDERAL SERVICES BY IN-**
7 **DIVIDUALS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PRO-**
8 **FICIENCY.**

9 (a) **ENSURING MEANINGFUL ACCESS.—**

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after
2 the date of the enactment of this Act, the head of
3 each agency shall ensure that individuals with LEP
4 can meaningfully access the federally conducted pro-
5 grams and activities of the agency, including by—

6 (A) consistent with any applicable Lan-
7 guage Access Technical Standards established
8 by the agency under subsection (c)—

9 (i) translating each vital document or
10 content created for the public into—

11 (I) any languages the agency fre-
12 quently encounters; and

13 (II) the dominant languages spo-
14 ken in the United States based on
15 current data of the Bureau of the
16 Census; and

17 (ii) adding multilingual functionality
18 to agency digital and information tech-
19 nology systems to identify and track the
20 spoken and written language needs of peo-
21 ple who engage with the agency and to
22 provide documents and content in other
23 languages;

1 (B) providing oral interpretation, sight
2 translation, and telephonic or remote interpre-
3 tation services to such individuals;

4 (C) recognizing, as an alternative to using
5 qualified interpreters or translators, the use of
6 demonstrably bilingual staff of the agency that
7 have been assessed and are qualified to deliver
8 accurate and effective communication as an ap-
9 propriate method of providing language assist-
10 ance;

11 (D) acknowledging that, when qualified,
12 such staff may offer service that is faster, more
13 effective, and more cost-efficient than the use of
14 qualified interpreters or translators;

15 (E) notifying the public of the availability
16 of language assistance, including interpreters,
17 translated documents and digital content, and
18 bilingual staff, through the use of multilingual
19 notices, taglines, signage or demonstrably equiv-
20 alent alternatives included on documents and
21 digital content the agency creates for the public
22 and in agency buildings and offices; and

23 (F) training employees of the agency who
24 interact with the public on any policy or proce-
25 dure established by the agency to implement

1 the language access plan established by the
2 agency under subsection (b).

3 (2) PUBLIC COMPLAINT AND TRACKING SYS-
4 TEM.—

5 (A) COMPLAINTS.—The Attorney General
6 shall establish and maintain a publicly acces-
7 sible system for individuals to submit com-
8 plaints to the Attorney General regarding bar-
9 riers to receiving meaningful access, as de-
10 scribed under paragraph (1), from an agency.

11 (B) RESPONSE.—The head of the agency
12 with respect to which the complaint under sub-
13 paragraph (A) is made shall respond to the
14 complaint not later than 60 days after receipt
15 of the complaint from the Attorney General.

16 (C) REPORTS.—The Attorney General
17 shall publish on the website of the Department
18 of Justice an annual report summarizing the
19 complaints made under subparagraph (A),
20 disaggregated by the agency that is the subject
21 of the complaint, the language with respect to
22 which the agency failed to provide access, and
23 the program or activity to which the person is
24 guaranteed meaningful access under paragraph
25 (1).

1 (b) LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN.—

2 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 1 year
3 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the head
4 of each agency shall establish a language access plan
5 to implement subsection (a) that—

6 (A) is practical and effective, readily imple-
7 mented, and responsive to the particular cir-
8 cumstances and mission of the agency;

9 (B) is consistent with the Language Access
10 Technical Standards established under sub-
11 section (c)(1);

12 (C) is consistent with the standards set
13 forth—

14 (i) in the most recent guidance of the
15 agency issued pursuant to Executive Order
16 13166 (42 U.S.C. 2000d–1 note; relating
17 to improving access to services for persons
18 with limited English proficiency);

19 (ii) in the policy guidance document
20 entitled “Enforcement of Title VI of the
21 Civil Rights Act of 1964—National Origin
22 Discrimination Against Persons With Lim-
23 ited English Proficiency” 65 Fed. Reg. 50,
24 123 (Aug. 16, 2000); and

1 (iii) in the Attorney General’s memo-
2 randum to the heads of Department com-
3 ponents issued on November 21, 2022, en-
4 titled “Strengthening the Federal Govern-
5 ment’s Commitment to Language Access”;

6 (D) identifies which populations containing
7 individuals with LEP are likely to seek access
8 to the services and programs of the agency, in-
9 cluding language populations that are emerging,
10 have been historically isolated, are of lesser dif-
11 fusion, and do not have a commonly used writ-
12 ten format;

13 (E) describes how multilingual communica-
14 tions will be meaningfully provided to the popu-
15 lations identified under subparagraph (D), in-
16 cluding whether such communications will be
17 provided through oral, visual, or community-
18 based modes of communication, as appropriate;

19 (F) in the case that the agency provides
20 assistance during emergency response situations
21 (such as disasters, public health crises, and
22 other urgent circumstances), specifies how mul-
23 tilingual communications will be meaningfully
24 provided to such populations during such situa-

tions, regardless of whether an official state of emergency has been declared; and

(G) sets procedures for the agency with respect to monitoring, evaluating, and improving the performance of the agency in implementing the plan, including—

(i) regular assessments of the language access needs of the agency and the effectiveness of the language access provided by the agency;

(ii) measurable performance indicators addressing timeliness, accuracy, and quality of language assistance services;

(iii) mechanisms for collecting and reviewing data on service usage, complaints, and identified barriers;

(iv) periodic internal reviews conducted by the civil rights office of the agency; and

(v) processes for corrective action and continuous improvement when deficiencies or gaps in meaningful access are identified.

(2) NOTICE AND COMMENT.—The head of each agency shall publish a proposal for the plan required to be established under paragraph (1) in the Federal

1 Register for a 60-day public comment period to en-
2 sure that stakeholders, including individuals with
3 LEP and organizations representing such individ-
4 uals, have an adequate opportunity to provide input
5 on how the head of such agency carries out the pro-
6 visions of this Act.

7 (3) FEDERAL REGISTER.—After considering
8 any comments received during the period described
9 under paragraph (2) with respect to plan published
10 under such paragraph, the head of an agency
11 shall—

12 (A) update such plan on the basis of such
13 comments as the head of the agency determines
14 appropriate; and

15 (B) publish a finalized version of the plan
16 in the Federal Register.

17 (4) SUBMISSION TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
18 AND TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 30 days after
19 the head of an agency establishes the language ac-
20 cess plan required by paragraph (1), the head of
21 such agency shall submit such plan to—

22 (A) the Attorney General; and

23 (B) the Chair and Ranking Member of—

24 (i) the Committee on the Judiciary of
25 the House of Representatives;

1 (ii) the Committee on the Judiciary of
2 the Senate;

3 (iii) the Committee on Oversight and
4 Government Reform of the House of Rep-
5 resentatives; and

6 (iv) the Committee on Homeland Se-
7 curity and Governmental Affairs of the
8 Senate.

9 (5) CENTRAL REPOSITORY.—The Department
10 of Justice shall establish and maintain a publicly
11 available website with the domain name “LEP.gov”
12 to serve as the central repository for each plan sub-
13 mitted to the Attorney General under paragraph
14 (4)(A).

15 (c) LANGUAGE ACCESS TECHNICAL STANDARDS.—

16 (1) ESTABLISHMENT OF STANDARD.—Not later
17 than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this
18 Act, the head of each agency, in consultation with
19 the Attorney General, the National Institute of
20 Standards and Technology, and stakeholders and
21 advocates from non-English-speaking communities,
22 shall establish standards to be known as Language
23 Access Technical Standards to—

1 (A) ensure meaningful access to federally
2 conducted programs and activities, as described
3 in subsection (a); and

4 (B) be used as a measure of progress to
5 evaluate the effectiveness and accuracy of lan-
6 guage access for federally conducted programs
7 and activities carried out by each agency.

8 (2) GENERAL ACCESSIBILITY REQUIRE-
9 MENTS.—The Language Access Technical Standards
10 shall, at a minimum, with respect to the systems
11 and services of the agency—

12 (A) allow individuals with LEP to access
13 any written content provided by the agency in
14 the language of their choice among the agency's
15 supported languages;

16 (B) ensure the functionality, quality, and
17 timeliness of the system and services for all lan-
18 guages;

19 (C) implement user-friendly interfaces that
20 account for varying literacy and digital skills;
21 and

22 (D) be culturally determined.

23 (3) UNDUE BURDEN EXCEPTION.—

24 (A) WRITTEN REQUEST.—In the case that
25 the head of an agency determines that compli-

1 ance with a specific requirement included in the
2 Language Access Technical Standards would
3 impose an undue burden on the agency, the
4 head of the agency shall submit to the Attorney
5 General a written request to waive such require-
6 ment for the agency that identifies—

7 (i) the specific requirement that would
8 impose such undue burden;

9 (ii) the nature of the burden; and

10 (iii) any alternative to fulfilling the re-
11 quirement and why each such alternative is
12 not feasible.

13 (B) ATTORNEY GENERAL REVIEW.—

14 (i) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 30
15 days after receiving a request under sub-
16 paragraph (A), the Attorney General shall
17 grant or deny the request.

18 (ii) DETERMINATION CRITERIA.—In
19 determining whether to grant or deny the
20 request of an agency under subparagraph
21 (A), the Attorney General shall consider
22 whether—

23 (I) individuals with limited
24 English proficiency are likely to inter-
25 act with the agency; and

1 (II) a failure to provide meaning-
2 ful language access is likely to result
3 in significant harm, denial of benefits,
4 or diminished civil rights protections.

5 (C) EXPIRATION.—A grant of a waiver
6 under this subsection shall expire two years
7 after such grant.

8 (D) RECORD.—The Attorney General shall
9 maintain a publicly accessible record of all writ-
10 ten requests received under subparagraph (A)
11 in the central repository established under sub-
12 section (b)(5).

13 (4) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMENT.—
14 Before establishing Language Access Technical
15 Standards, or updating any such standards, the
16 head of an agency shall provide opportunity for pub-
17 lic comment and engage communities representing
18 individuals with LEP, including community and cul-
19 tural organizations that work with individuals with
20 LEP, and providers of professional language serv-
21 ices.

22 (5) UPDATES.—The Language Access Tech-
23 nical Standards shall be reviewed at least once every
24 3 years, and updated as necessary following such re-
25 view.

1 (6) ADOPTION.—The head of each agency shall
2 certify compliance with the Language Access Tech-
3 nical Standards annually to the Attorney General.

4 (7) SCOPE.—The Language Access Technical
5 Standards shall apply to all agency programs, activi-
6 ties, and communications, including—

7 (A) in-person, telephonic, and virtual inter-
8 actions;

9 (B) paper and digital content and docu-
10 ments;

11 (C) websites, portals, and mobile applica-
12 tions; and

13 (D) artificial intelligence-assisted and ma-
14 chine translation language assistance services,
15 including automated translation, transcription,
16 and interpretation technologies.

17 (d) AI AND AUTOMATED LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE
18 SERVICES.—

19 (1) LIMITATION.—The head of an agency—

20 (A) may not fully replace any qualified lan-
21 guage assistance services of the agency with ar-
22 tificial intelligence or machine translation serv-
23 ices; and

1 (B) shall require a qualified human trans-
2 lator or interpreter to verify any use of such
3 service or machine translation by the agency.

4 (2) REQUIREMENTS.—The head of each agency
5 shall ensure that any artificial intelligence-assisted
6 language assistance services used by the agency—

7 (A) do not replace any qualified translators
8 and interpreters;

9 (B) publicly disclose on an annual basis on
10 www.LEP.gov data sources, limitations, con-
11 fidence levels, and error rates of the service;

12 (C) comply with section 552a of title 5,
13 United States Code (commonly referred to as
14 the Privacy Act of 1974), subchapter II of
15 chapter 35 of title 44, United States Code, and
16 the E-Government Act of 2002 (44 U.S.C.
17 3501 note; Public Law 107–347) and protect
18 personal and sensitive information from disclo-
19 sure;

20 (D) are tested to prevent discrimination
21 based on language, culture, ethnicity, or other
22 protected characteristics, with mitigation strate-
23 gies documented;

24 (E) are reviewed and validated by qualified
25 translators and interpreters to ensure proper

1 cultural context, idiomatic accuracy, and clarity
2 of the translation or interpretation; and

3 (F) are continuously monitored by the
4 agency for performance, with errors reported
5 and corrective actions for user-reported inac-
6 curacies in translation and interpretation imple-
7 mented.

8 (3) BEST PRACTICES.—Not later than 1 year
9 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the At-
10 torney General shall issue guidance on best practices
11 for the use of artificial intelligence in language as-
12 sistance services, including validation, monitoring,
13 and accountability measures for such artificial intel-
14 ligence.

15 (4) AUDIT REQUIREMENT.—

16 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Inspector General
17 of each agency shall conduct, at least once
18 every two years after the date of the enactment
19 of this Act, an audit of all artificial intelligence-
20 assisted language systems to assess accuracy,
21 fairness, cultural relevance, and compliance
22 with the Language Access Technical Standards.

23 (B) REPORT.—An Inspector General shall
24 submit to the Attorney General a report on an
25 audit conducted under subparagraph (A) not

1 later than 90 days after such audit is com-
2 pleted.

3 (C) PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY.—The Attor-
4 ney General shall make publicly available a
5 summary of the report submitted under sub-
6 paragraph (B).

7 (5) NIST.—The Director of the National Insti-
8 tute of Standards and Technology shall provide tech-
9 nical expertise, validation protocols, and standardiza-
10 tion tools for artificial intelligence-assisted language
11 assistance services of agencies.

12 (e) INTERAGENCY COORDINATION.—

13 (1) INTERAGENCY LANGUAGE ACCESS STAND-
14 ARD COUNCIL.—The Administrator of General Serv-
15 ices shall convene an Interagency Language Access
16 Standards Council to coordinate updates, best prac-
17 tices, and research on emerging technologies.

18 (2) LANGUAGE ACCESS WORKING GROUP.—

19 (A) IN GENERAL.—There is established an
20 Language Access Working Group to—

21 (i) serve as a central resource for pro-
22 viding support and technical assistance to
23 agencies in implementing the language ac-
24 cess plan of the agency; and

1 (ii) directly engage with community
2 groups, individuals with LEP, and other
3 stakeholders to ensure adherence with this
4 Act.

5 (B) MEMBERSHIP.—The members of the
6 Language Access Working Group shall be com-
7 prised of one Language Access Coordinator
8 from each agency and the Attorney General.

9 (C) HEAD OF GROUP.—The Attorney Gen-
10 eral shall serve as the head of the Language
11 Access Working Group.

12 (f) ESTABLISHMENT OF LANGUAGE ACCESS COORDI-
13 NATOR POSITION.—

14 (1) POSITION.—There is established in each
15 agency a position to be known as the Language Ac-
16 cess Coordinator.

17 (2) DESIGNATION.—The head of each agency
18 shall designate an officer or employee of the agency
19 to serve as the Language Access Coordinator for the
20 agency.

21 (3) DUTIES.—The Language Access Coordi-
22 nator shall—

23 (A) serve as point of contact for each lan-
24 guage access effort of the agency;

1 (B) ensure that each agency component
2 that frequently interacts with individuals with
3 LEP provides, if feasible, mandatory annual
4 training to managers, personnel who frequently
5 communicate with individuals with LEP, and
6 personnel who arrange for language support, on
7 this Act, the language access plan of the agen-
8 cy, and agency procedures for identifying lan-
9 guage access needs, providing language assist-
10 ance services, working with interpreters and
11 translators, requesting document translations,
12 and tracking the use of language access serv-
13 ices;

14 (C) determine annually whether additional
15 federally conducted programs and activities
16 should be made accessible for individuals with
17 LEP and notify agency components of their re-
18 sponsibility to provide such access; and

19 (D) beginning on the date that is 3 years
20 after the date of the enactment of this Act,
21 evaluate the language access plan of the agency
22 established under subsection (b)(1), including a
23 review of the costs of language assistance serv-
24 ices, and propose changes to agency compo-
25 nents, as appropriate, to refine such plan.

1 (g) NONCOMPLIANCE.—Noncompliance with the re-
2 quirements of this Act—

3 (1) shall be treated as discrimination under title
4 VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d
5 et seq.);

6 (2) may be addressed by the Department of
7 Justice, which shall have enforcement authority, in-
8 cluding the authority to conduct an investigation,
9 commence an administrative action, and bring an ac-
10 tion for civil or injunctive remedies; and

11 (3) may be addressed by an aggrieved party by
12 bringing an administrative action with the Depart-
13 ment of Justice, or bringing an action for civil or in-
14 junctive remedies.

15 (h) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

16 (1) AGENCY.—The term “agency” has the
17 meaning given that term in section 551 of title 5,
18 United States Code.

19 (2) INDIVIDUAL WITH LEP.—The term “indi-
20 vidual with LEP” means an individual for whom
21 English is not a primary language and who has a
22 limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand
23 the English language (including an individual who is
24 able to speak or understand the English language,

1 but has a limited ability to read or write the English
2 language).

3 (3) LANGUAGE ACCESS COORDINATOR.—The
4 term “Language Access Coordinator” means the po-
5 sition of an agency established under subsection
6 (f)(1).

7 (4) LANGUAGE ACCESS TECHNICAL STAND-
8 ARDS.—The term “Language Access Technical
9 Standards” means the standards of an agency estab-
10 lished under subsection (c)(1).

11 (5) LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES.—The
12 term “language assistance services” means oral and
13 written language assistance services used to provide
14 individuals with LEP meaningful access to, and an
15 equal opportunity to participate fully in, the services,
16 activities, and other programs administered by the
17 Federal Government.

18 (6) MEANINGFUL ACCESS.—The term “mean-
19 ingful access” means access that—

20 (A) results in accurate, timely, and effec-
21 tive communication at no cost to the individual
22 with LEP; and

23 (B) is comparable to the access provided to
24 individuals who are proficient in English.

1 (7) PRIMARY LANGUAGE.—The term “primary
2 language” means the language in which an indi-
3 vidual most effectively communicates.

4 (8) PROGRAM OR ACTIVITY.—The term “pro-
5 gram or activity” means all the operations of an
6 agency that involve contact with the public, the ad-
7 ministration of Federal benefits, or communication
8 with members of the public or program participants.

9 (9) QUALIFIED INTERPRETER OR TRANS-
10 LATOR.—The term “qualified interpreter or trans-
11 lator” means—

12 (A) an individual who—

13 (i) is capable of effective, accurate,
14 and impartial rendition of spoken or signed
15 communication from one language to an-
16 other between people who speak, sign,
17 read, or write in a different language, both
18 receptively and expressively, using any nec-
19 essary specialized vocabulary and with ap-
20 propriate cultural relevance, either simulta-
21 neously or consecutively;

22 (ii) demonstrates to the Language Ac-
23 cess Coordinator of the agency proficiency
24 in and ability to listen to a spoken lan-
25 guage, seeing or feeling a signed or manual

language, or reading something written in one language and expressing what is being conveyed by that language accurately and with appropriate cultural relevance into another language, either simultaneously or consecutively, including with respect to any specialized term, concept, or any particularized vocabulary or phraseology particular to the program or service concerned that is being conveyed; and

(iii) understands and adheres to the roles of interpreters or translators, including any confidentiality, ethics, and impartiality rules.

(10) VITAL DOCUMENT.—The term “vital document” means any written material containing information critical for—

(A) accessing or understanding a Federal program or activity or required by law; or

(B) obtaining any aid, benefit, service, or training, such as—

(i) an application for a benefit or service;

(ii) a consent or complaint form;

1 (iii) a notice of rights and responsibil-
2 ities; or

3 (iv) a letter or notice that requires a
4 response from a beneficiary, applicant,
5 participant, or employee.

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