

.....
(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R.

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. MENG introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

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.—

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

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

14 (II) the dominant languages spo-
15 ken in the United States based on
16 current U.S. Census data; 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 in 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 describe
10 under paragraph (1), from an agency.

11 (B) RESPONSE.—The head of the agency
12 with respect to which the complaint was made
13 shall respond to each complaint that was made
14 not later than 60 days after receipt of the com-
15 plaint 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 issued under subsection
11 (c);12 (C) is consistent with the standards set
13 forth—14 (i) the initial LEP Guidance of the
15 agency;16 (ii) the policy guidance document enti-
17 tled “Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil
18 Rights Act of 1964—National Origin Dis-
19 crimination Against Persons With Limited
20 English Proficiency” 65 Fed. Reg. 50, 123
21 (Aug. 16, 2000); and22 (iii) the Attorney General’s memo-
23 randum to the heads of Department com-
24 ponents issued on November 21, 2022 en-

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

10 (E) describes how multilingual communica-
11 tions will be meaningfully provided to the popu-
12 lations identified pursuant under subparagraph
13 (D), including whether such communications
14 will be provided through oral, visual, or commu-
15 nity-based modes of communication as appro-
16 priate;

17 (F) in the case that the agency provides
18 assistance during emergency response situations
19 (such as disasters, public health crises, and
20 other urgent circumstances) specifies how mul-
21 tilingual communications will be meaningfully
22 provided to such populations during such situa-
23 tions regardless of whether an official state of
24 emergency has been declared; and

1 (G) sets procedures for the agency with re-
2 spect to monitoring, evaluating, and improving
3 the performance of agency in implementing the
4 plan, including—

5 (i) regular assessments of the lan-
6 guage access needs of the agency and the
7 effectiveness of the language access pro-
8 vided by the agency;

9 (ii) measurable performance indicators
10 addressing timeliness, accuracy, and qual-
11 ity of language assistance services;

12 (iii) mechanisms for collecting and re-
13 viewing data on service usage, complaints,
14 and identified barriers;

15 (iv) periodic internal reviews con-
16 ducted by the civil rights office of the
17 agency; and

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

1 LEP and organizations representing such individuals,
2 have an adequate opportunity to provide input
3 on how the head of such agency carries out the pro-
4 visions of this Act.

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

13 (B) publish a finalized version of the plan
14 in the Federal Register.

20 (A) the Attorney General; and

21 (B) the Chair and Ranking Minority Mem-
22 ber of—

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

15 (c) LANGUAGE ACCESS TECHNICAL STANDARDS.—

1 (A) ensure meaningful access to Federally-
2 conducted programs and activities under sub-
3 section (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.

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-

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

10 (ii) the nature of the burden; and

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

14 (B) ATTORNEY GENERAL REVIEW.—

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

19 (ii) DETERMINATION CRITERIA.—In
20 determining whether to grant or deny a re-
21 quest under paragraph (2), the Attorney
22 General an agency shall consider wheth-
23 er—

1 (I) individuals with limited
2 English proficiency are likely to inter-
3 act with the agency; and

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

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

11 (A) in-person, telephonic, and virtual inter-
12 actions;

13 (B) paper and digital content and docu-
14 ments;

15 (C) websites, portals, and mobile applica-
16 tions; and

17 (D) artificial intelligence-assisted and ma-
18 chine translation language assistance services,
19 including automated translation, transcription,
20 and interpretation technologies.

21 (d) AI AND AUTOMATED LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE
22 SERVICES.—

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

24 (A) may not fully replace any qualified lan-
25 guage assistance services of the agency with ar-

1 tificial intelligence or machine translation serv-
2 ices; and

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

6 (2) REQUIREMENTS.—The head of each agency
7 shall ensure that any artificial intelligence-assisted
8 language assistance services used the by the agen-
9 cy—

10 (A) do not replace any qualified translators
11 and interpreters;

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

15 (C) comply with section 552a of title 5,
16 United States Code (commonly referred to as
17 the Privacy Act of 1974), the Federal Informa-
18 tion Security Modernization Act of 2014, and
19 the E—Government Act of 2002, and protect
20 personal and sensitive information from disclo-
21 sure;

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

1 (E) are reviewed and validated by qualified
2 translators and interpreters to ensure proper
3 cultural context, idiomatic accuracy, and clarity
4 of the translation or interpretation; and

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

17 (4) AUDIT REQUIREMENT.—

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

1 (B) REPORT.—An Inspector General shall
2 submit to the Attorney General a report on an
3 audit conducted under subparagraph (A), not
4 later than 90 days after such audit is com-
5 pleted.

6 (C) PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY.—The Attorney
7 General shall make publicly available a
8 summary of the report submitted under sub-
9 paragraph (B).

10 (5) NIST.—The National Institute of Standards and Technology shall provide technical expertise, validation protocols, and standardization tools for artificial intelligence-assisted language assistance services.

15 (e) INTERAGENCY COORDINATION.—

21 (2) LANGUAGE ACCESS WORKING GROUP.—

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

24 (i) serve as a central resource for pro-
25 viding support and technical assistance to

1 agencies in implementing the language ac-
2 cess plan of the agency; and

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

7 (B) MEMBERSHIP.—The members of the
8 Group shall be comprised of one Language Ac-
9 cess Coordinator from each agency and the At-
10 torney General.

11 (C) HEAD OF GROUP.—The Attorney Gen-
12 eral shall serve as the head of the Group.

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

15 (1) POSITION.—There is established in agency
16 a position to be known as the Language Access Co-
17 ordinator.

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

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

1 (B) shall ensure that each agency compo-
2 nent that frequently interacts with individuals
3 with LEP provides, if feasible, mandatory an-
4 nual training to managers, personnel who fre-
5 quently communicate with individuals with
6 LEP, and personnel who arrange for language
7 support, on this Act, the language access plan
8 of the agency, and agency procedures for identi-
9 fying language access needs, providing language
10 assistance services, working with interpreters
11 and translators, requesting document trans-
12 lations, and tracking the use of language access
13 services;

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 including a review of the costs of language as-
23 sistance services, and propose changes to agen-
24 cy components, as appropriate, to refine such
25 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.), thereby granting the Department of Justice
6 enforcement authority, including the authority to
7 conduct an investigation, commence an administra-
8 tive action, and seek civil remedies; and

9 (2) may trigger administrative, civil, or injunc-
10 tive remedies by aggrieved parties or the Attorney
11 General.

12 (h) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

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

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

24 (3) LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES.—The
25 term “language assistance services” means oral and

1 written language assistance services used to provide
2 individuals with LEP meaningful access to, and an
3 equal opportunity to participate fully in, the services,
4 activities, and other programs administered by the
5 Federal Government.

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

8 (A) results in accurate, timely, and effec-
9 tive communication at no cost to the individual
10 with LEP; and

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

13 (5) PRIMARY LANGUAGE.—The term “primary
14 language” means the language in which an indi-
15 vidual most effectively communicates.

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

21 (7) QUALIFIED INTERPRETER OR TRANS-
22 LATOR.—The term “qualified interpreter or trans-
23 lator” means—

24 (A) an individual who—

1 (i) capable of effective, accurate, and
2 impartial rendition of spoken or signed
3 communication from one language to an-
4 other between people who speak, sign,
5 read, or write in a different language, both
6 receptively and expressively, using any nec-
7 essary specialized vocabulary and with ap-
8 propriate cultural relevance, either simulta-
9 neously or consecutively;

10 (ii) demonstrates to the Language Ac-
11 cess Coordinator of the agency proficiency
12 in and ability to listen to a spoken lan-
13 guage, seeing or feeling a signed or manual
14 language, or reading something written in
15 one language and expressing what is being
16 conveyed by that language accurately and
17 with appropriate cultural relevance into an-
18 other language, either simultaneously or
19 consecutively, including with respect to any
20 specialized term, concept, or any particu-
21 larized vocabulary or phraseology par-
22 ticular to the program or service concerned
23 that is being conveyed; and

24 (iii) understands and adheres to the
25 roles of interpreters or translators, includ-

10 (i) an application for a benefit or
11 service;
12 (ii) a consent or complaint form;
13 (iii) a notice of rights and responsibil-
14 ities; or
15 (iv) a letter or notice that requires a
16 response from a beneficiary, applicant,
17 participant, or employee.