

STATE OF NEW YORK

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Cal. No. 263

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

February 26, 2021

Introduced by Sens. KENNEDY, BIAGGI, BROUK, GOUNARDES, HARCKHAM, HOYLMAN, JACKSON, KAPLAN, LIU, MAY, RAMOS, RIVERA, RYAN, THOMAS -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Finance -- recommitted to the Committee on Finance in accordance with Senate Rule 6, sec. 8 -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee -- reported favorably from said committee, ordered to first and second report, ordered to a third reading, amended and ordered reprinted, retaining its place in the order of third reading

AN ACT to amend the executive law, the public authorities law and the county law, in relation to requiring certain documents and forms to be provided in multiple languages

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Legislative findings and intent. The legislature hereby
2 finds that as New York's immigrant population continues to grow, inability
3 to access documents translated into languages that community members
4 read and lack of interpretation of government services and resources
5 into languages that community members speak are major barriers to the
6 advancement of the state's immigrant population. However, currently
7 language access in New York is based on an Executive Order which
8 mandates translation into the same ten languages across the entire
9 state, failing to account for significant differences in immigrant populations
10 across New York's regions. Translation is also only mandatory in
11 a handful of executive specific agencies, instead of across all subdivisions
12 of state and county government. The legislature believes language
13 access improves the lives of immigrants by increasing opportunities for
14 employment, business ownership, and other vital services, while making
15 staff time at state agencies and authorities more efficient, benefiting
16 all of New York.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

LBD09702-06-2

1 § 2. The executive law is amended by adding a new article 49-C to read
2 as follows:

3 ARTICLE 49-C
4 LANGUAGE ACCESS

5 Section 996. Language access.

6 996-a. Private right of action.

7 § 996. Language access. 1. Each state agency that provides direct
8 public services shall translate vital documents, including essential
9 public documents such as forms and instructions provided to or completed
10 by program beneficiaries or participants. Such translation shall be
11 available in the twelve most common non-English languages spoken by
12 limited English proficient immigrants in the state who arrived within
13 the last five years according to the American community survey, as
14 published by the United States census bureau.

15 2. Each such agency shall additionally make such translations avail-
16 able within each region of the state, as established by article eleven
17 of the economic development law, in the three most common non-English
18 languages which are spoken in that region by limited English proficient
19 immigrants who arrived within the last five years according to the Amer-
20 ican community survey, as published by the United States census bureau,
21 which are not already included among the twelve languages specified in
22 subdivision one of this section.

23 3. The list of most common languages shall be updated every two years,
24 based on the most recent American community survey data, as published by
25 the United States census bureau.

26 4. Each agency shall provide interpretation services between the agen-
27 cy and an individual in their primary language, including American Sign
28 Language, with respect to the provision of services or benefits.

29 5. Within ninety days of the effective date of this section, each
30 agency shall publicly publish a language access plan which reflects how
31 the agency will comply with the language access requirements of this
32 section, and shall set forth, at a minimum:

33 (a) core communication principles with respect to people in the limit-
34 ed English proficient community;

35 (b) when and by what means the agency will provide or is already
36 providing language access services;

37 (c) the titles of all available translated documents and the languages
38 into which they have been translated;

39 (d) the number of public contact positions in the agency and the
40 number of bilingual employees in public contact positions including the
41 languages they speak;

42 (e) a training plan for agency employees which includes, at a minimum,
43 annual training on the language access policies of the agency and how to
44 provide language assistance services;

45 (f) a plan of how the agency intends to notify the population of
46 offered language assistance services;

47 (g) a language access coordinator at the agency, who shall be publicly
48 identified;

49 (h) a phone number or email address by which the public can lodge
50 complaints against the agency for noncompliance. Such complaints shall
51 be kept for a minimum of two years; and

52 (i) make public the number of complaints during a twelve month period
53 against noncompliance and resolutions to such complaints.

54 § 996-a. Private right of action. Any person injured by noncompliance
55 with the provisions of this article may bring an action to recover actu-

1 al damages suffered. In any action brought under this section, the court
2 may award reasonable attorney's fees to a prevailing plaintiff.

3 § 3. Article 9 of the public authorities law is amended by adding a
4 new title 13 to read as follows:

5 TITLE 13
6 LANGUAGE ACCESS

7 Section 2988. Language access.

8 2988-a. Private right of action.

9 § 2988. Language access. 1. Each state authority that provides direct
10 public services shall translate vital documents, including essential
11 public documents such as forms and instructions provided to or completed
12 by program beneficiaries or participants. The translation shall be
13 available in the twelve most common non-English languages spoken by
14 limited English proficient immigrants in the state who arrived within
15 the last five years according to the American community survey, as
16 published by the United States census bureau.

17 2. Each such authority shall make such translations available within
18 each region of the state, as established by article eleven of the
19 economic development law, in the three most common non-English languages
20 which are spoken in that region by limited English proficient immigrants
21 who arrived within the last five years according to the American commu-
22 nity survey, as published by the United States census bureau, which are
23 not already included among the twelve languages specified in subdivision
24 one of this section.

25 3. The list of most common languages shall be updated no less than
26 every two years from the effective date of this section, based on the
27 most recent American community survey, as published by the United States
28 census bureau.

29 4. Each such authority shall provide interpretation services between
30 the agency and an individual in his or her primary language, including
31 American Sign Language, with respect to the provision of services or
32 benefits. This includes both in-office services, and services provided
33 outside of the agency office. This includes, but is not limited to, the
34 department of motor vehicles, and the administering of road tests.

35 5. Within ninety days of the effective date of this section, each such
36 authority shall publish a language access plan which reflects how the
37 authority will comply with the language access requirements pursuant to
38 this section, and shall set forth, at a minimum:

39 a. core communication principles with respect to people in the limited
40 English proficient community;

41 b. when and by what means the authority will provide or is already
42 providing language access services;

43 c. the titles of all available translated documents and the languages
44 into which they have been translated;

45 d. the number of public contact positions in the authority and the
46 number of bilingual employees in public contact positions including the
47 languages they speak;

48 e. a training plan for employees which includes, at a minimum, annual
49 training on the language access policies of the authority and how to
50 provide language assistance services;

51 f. a plan of how the authority intends to notify the population of
52 offered language assistance services;

53 g. a language access coordinator at the authority, who shall be
54 publicly identified;

1 h. a phone number or email address by which the public can lodge
2 complaints against the agency for noncompliance. Such complaints shall
3 be kept for a minimum of two years; and

4 i. make public the number of complaints during a twelve month period
5 against noncompliance and resolutions to such complaints.

6 § 2988-a. Private right of action. Any person injured by noncompliance
7 with the provisions of this article may bring an action to recover actual
8 damages suffered. In any action brought under this section, the court
9 may award reasonable attorney's fees to a prevailing plaintiff.

10 § 4. The county law is amended by adding a new article 24-A to read as
11 follows:

12 ARTICLE 24-A
13 LANGUAGE ACCESS

14 Section 950. Language access.

15 951. Private right of action.

16 § 950. Language access. 1. Every political entity of a county that
17 provides direct public services shall translate vital documents, includ-
18 ing essential public documents such as forms and instructions provided
19 to or completed by program beneficiaries or participants. The trans-
20 lation shall be available in the twelve most common non-English
21 languages spoken by limited English proficient immigrants in the state
22 who arrived within the last five years according to the American commu-
23 nity survey, as published by the United States census bureau.

24 2. Each such political entity of a county shall make such translations
25 available within each region of the state, as established by article
26 eleven of the economic development law, in the three most common non-
27 English languages which are spoken in that region by limited English
28 proficient immigrants who arrived within the last five years according
29 to the American community survey, as published by the United States
30 census bureau, which are not already included among the twelve languages
31 specified in subdivision one of this section.

32 3. Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision one of this section,
33 a county may add additional languages as necessary to accommodate local
34 variances from statewide languages, provided such languages are added
35 after public notice and opportunity to comment.

36 4. The list of most common languages shall be updated no less than
37 every two years from the effective date of this section, based on the
38 most recent American community survey, as published by the United States
39 census bureau, and any additional languages such county shall choose to
40 select.

41 5. Each such political entity of a county shall provide interpretation
42 services between the entity and an individual in his or her primary
43 language with respect to the provision of services or benefits.

44 6. Within ninety days of the effective date of this section, each such
45 political entity of a county shall publish a language access plan which
46 reflects how the political entity will comply with the language access
47 requirements pursuant to this section, and shall set forth, at a mini-
48 mum:

49 (a) core communication principles with respect to people in the limit-
50 ed English proficient community;

51 (b) when and by what means the political entity shall provide or is
52 already providing language access services;

53 (c) the titles of all available translated documents and the languages
54 into which they have been translated;

1 (d) the number of public contact positions in the political entity and
2 the number of bilingual employees in public contact positions including
3 the languages they speak;

4 (e) a training plan for employees of the political entity, which
5 includes, at a minimum, annual training on the language access policies
6 of the political entity and how to provide language assistance services;

7 (f) a plan of how the political entity intends to notify the popu-
8 lation of offered language assistance services; and

9 (g) a language access coordinator at the political entity, who shall
10 be publicly identified.

11 § 951. Private right of action. Any person injured by noncompliance
12 with the provisions of this article may bring an action to recover actu-
13 al damages suffered. In any action brought under this section, the court
14 may award reasonable attorney's fees to a prevailing plaintiff.

15 § 5. This act shall take effect immediately.