STATE OF NEW YORK

1771

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

January 13, 2025

Introduced by Sen. FERNANDEZ -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Social Services

AN ACT to amend the social services law, in relation to ensuring adequate access to information by individuals who have limited English proficiency

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

Section 1. Section 95-a of the social services law is amended by adding a new subdivision 9 to read as follows:

9. (a) The department shall develop and implement a plan to ensure adequate access to information by individuals who have limited English proficiency or otherwise require communication assistance. Notwithstanding the provisions of any general, special or local law to the contrary, and subject to appropriation, the department shall:

(i) translate necessary documents, including but not limited to, forms and instructions provided to or completed by the program beneficiaries or participants, into the twelve most common non-English languages spoken by individuals with limited-English proficiency in New York state, based on United States census data. Pursuant to section two hundred two-a of the executive law, the department may, in its discretion, offer up to four additional languages beyond the twelve most common languages. Such additional languages shall be determined by the provisions established in such section two hundred two-a.

(ii) offer, upon request, interpretation services between the entity administering the program and an individual in such individual's primary language with respect to the provision of services or benefits; and

(iii) offer, upon request or demonstrated need, services to an individual who requires additional assistance due to partial or total deafness, blindness, speech impediment, or cognitive impairment; and

(iv) subject to appropriation, work with the office for the aging to provide additional translation services to both agencies to assist with

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

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informing low-income and elderly households potentially eligible to receive supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits.

(b) Each commissioner of social services shall retain discretion to offer additional language translation services to low-income recipients, as necessary.

§ 2. This act shall take effect on the ninetieth day after it shall have become a law.