

 LANGUAGE ACCESS
MARYLAND

MARYLAND LANGUAGE ADVISORY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FY2026





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June 2026

The Honorable Wes Moore, Governor
 State House, 100 State Circle
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Aruna Miller, Lieutenant Governor
 State House, 100 State Circle
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Bill Ferguson, President
 Senate of Maryland
 State House, H-107
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk, Speaker
 Maryland House of Delegates
 State House, H-107
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Governor Moore, Lieutenant Governor Miller, President Ferguson, and Speaker Peña-Melnyk:

On behalf of the Maryland Language Advisory Board (MLAB), we are pleased to submit this annual report to the Maryland General Assembly pursuant to §10–1103.1(I) of the State Government Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, as enacted by House Bill 1473 (Chapter 434, 2025).

This report describes the work undertaken by the Board along with the Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and the Maryland Department of Disabilities during the initial implementation period following the law's October 1, 2025 effective date. It reflects the collective efforts of State agency partners, community organizations, and the dedicated staff who have worked to build the foundation for a statewide language access program.

The Board is committed to ensuring that every Marylander, regardless of the language they speak or their disability status, receives equal, meaningful access to public services. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this report and look forward to continued partnership with the General Assembly in advancing this important work.

Respectfully,

Mari Dorn-Lopez

John P. Brennan, Jr.

Mari Dorn-Lopez
 Deputy Director
 Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

John P. Brennan, Jr., MPAP
 Assistant Secretary, Operations
 Maryland Department of Disabilities

I. Background

Maryland is committed to ensuring that every resident who is eligible for State services can access and benefit from them fully, regardless of the language they speak or a disability affecting communication. Providing meaningful access to public services strengthens trust, improves service delivery, and helps ensure that no Marylander is left behind.

For more than two decades, Maryland law has required State departments, agencies, and programs to provide equal access to public services for individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Since the enactment of Maryland's original language access law in 2002, covered agencies have been required to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to services, including offering oral language assistance services and translating vital documents into languages spoken by significant portions of the population served.

To strengthen and support agencies in implementing these longstanding requirements, Governor Wes Moore signed HB1473 "State Government - Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals With Limited English Proficiency and Individuals With Disabilities" into law in 2025. The law builds upon Maryland's existing language access requirements by expanding coverage to individuals with disabilities affecting communication, establishing a statewide advisory and coordination structure, and creating more standardized planning, reporting, and accountability expectations for covered agencies.

HB1473 took effect on October 1, 2025, with full compliance required by July 1, 2028. The law requires covered State departments, agencies, and programs to ensure equal access to public services for individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and individuals with disabilities affecting communication.

To support implementation, the State established a coordinated effort co-led by the Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA) and Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD). Together, these partners are working to build a statewide approach to language access through the Maryland Language Advisory Board (MLAB).

As outlined in the law, MLAB is responsible for assessing statewide capacity, identifying needs, and developing guidance to support agencies in providing meaningful access to services.

II. Key Accomplishments

The first year of implementation; spanning the period following the law's October 1, 2025 effective date; focused on building the institutional foundations, relationships, and tools necessary to support statewide language access compliance. The following accomplishments reflect significant progress across several areas of work.

A. Statewide Foundation Building

In 2021, the State established the Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA) to serve as a lead in matters affecting immigrants and promote their full participation in

Maryland's civic and economic life. Among its responsibilities was advancing language access to ensure that residents could meaningfully engage with State programs and services. The Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs hired their first Language Access Manager in October 2025 to strengthen language access capacity across the State, lead day-to-day implementation of HB 1473, serve as a primary point of contact for State agencies, and coordinate the activities of MLAB. This dedicated position provides the organizational infrastructure necessary to drive consistent, cross-agency progress.

OIA and MDOD also established and convened the Maryland Language Advisory Board (MLAB), fulfilling the statutory requirement under §10-1103.1 that the Board be convened no later than January 1, 2026.

MLAB is co-chaired by:

- Mari Dorn Lopez, Deputy Director, Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA)
- John Brennan, Assistant Secretary, Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD)

MLAB members include:

- Tanéa Brown, Outreach Interpreter Manager, Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH)
- Lilly Madigan, Senior Director of User Experience & Service Design, Department of Information Technology (DoIT)
- Bethany Causey, Chief Customer Experience Officer, Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Kenithia Taylor, Executive Director, Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, Department of Health (MDH)
- Dr. Teresa Timmons-Parrott, Director of Multilingual Education and World Languages, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)
- Anupa Geevarghese, Director of Policy, Department of Labor (MD Labor)

MLAB is staffed jointly by the Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and the Maryland Department of Disabilities:

- Pratikshya Mudvari, Language Access Manager, Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA)
- Dan Doggett, IT Accessibility Specialist, Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD)

B. Agency Engagement

MLAB is conducting one-on-one meetings with State agencies to assess current language access practices, understand implementation challenges, and establish working relationships in advance of the compliance deadlines. In parallel, OIA began reviewing existing agency language access plans and Title VI materials to evaluate current capacity and identify gaps.

C. Data Analysis and Risk Framework Development

To support a data-driven approach to implementation, OIA conducted a statewide LEP population analysis using American Community Survey (ACS) data and IPUMS microdata. This analysis explored methodology for defining "geographic area served" under the statute and for applying the 3% threshold requirement for vital document translation.

Building on this analysis, MLAB is developing a draft LEP Risk Classification framework that assigns a High, Medium, or Low risk designation based on the size and characteristics of the LEP populations being served. This framework will guide prioritization of technical assistance and compliance support in the year ahead.

D. Tools, Templates, and Early Infrastructure Development

MLAB developed a suite of practical tools and resources to support agencies in beginning implementation:

- An agency onboarding memo outlining required actions for the current fiscal year
- A statewide language access resource guide
- A translation and interpretation standard operating procedure (SOP)
- iSpeak Cards for use in public-facing settings
- A "Know Your Language Access Rights" public information brochure

These materials are designed to provide agencies with immediately usable resources while longer-term infrastructure, including standardized Language Access Plan templates, is developed.

E. Community Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement

Consistent with the statute's emphasis on community input, MLAB actively engaged external stakeholders throughout the year. Outreach efforts included meetings with local jurisdictions, including Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Montgomery County, and Prince George's County to learn from established local language access programs and explore opportunities for coordination. MLAB also engaged national leaders in language access implementation, including the New York State Office of Language Access and the New Jersey Office of New Americans, to identify best practices and transferable models.

Community partners were solicited for input on service gaps and unmet needs among LEP populations. MLAB is also exploring a Communities of Practice model to support ongoing, peer-based learning and collaboration among State agencies and community organizations.

F. Awareness, Training, and Outreach

MLAB developed and delivered Language Access 101 training for State agency staff covering legal requirements under HB 1473 and best practices for equitable service

delivery. Additional training addressed practical implementation, including working effectively with interpreters and providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services.

MLAB also launched a Language Access Month awareness campaign in April, including a statewide panel discussion on language access and the "Maryland Welcomes You" awareness campaign. Staff also participated in peer learning opportunities and external training to continue building organizational expertise.

III. FY2027 Priorities

Building on the baseline established in FY2026, the coming year will focus on statewide implementation, standardization, and the development of accountability infrastructure. The following priorities reflect both the statutory requirements of HB 1473 and the practical needs identified through agency and community engagement.

A. Landscape Assessment: Evidence-Based Implementation

MLAB will conduct a comprehensive environmental scan of all identified State agencies alongside a formal community needs assessment to develop a complete picture of Maryland's current language access landscape. The agency scan will assess existing policies and practices, available resources, and agency readiness for full implementation, building on the initial engagement conducted in FY2026 to produce a structured baseline assessment for each agency. The community needs assessment will engage community-based organizations, legal and social services providers, and individuals with lived experience to document unmet needs and the on the ground realities faced by LEP residents across the State. Taken together, the findings from both efforts will inform the development of agency Language Access Plans, prioritization of technical assistance, training priorities, and the statewide reporting framework.

B. Finalization of the Statewide Language Access Framework

MLAB will develop and distribute a standardized Language Access Plan template for use by all identified agencies. This template will establish clear definitions, expectations, and compliance benchmarks, and will be accompanied by guidance to help agencies tailor their plans to their specific populations and service contexts.

C. Agency Implementation Support

MLAB will launch structured support systems to assist agencies as they move into active implementation. This includes technical assistance and office hours, an interagency Community of Practice, and targeted support for high LEP risk agencies identified through the landscape assessment and risk classification framework. Efforts will include developing and delivering expanded training for State employees statewide, covering

language access legal requirements, effective practices for working with interpreters, and the provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate services.

D. Data, Metrics, and Reporting

MLAB will implement a statewide reporting framework aligned with the annual agency reporting requirements established in §10-1103(D) of the Act. Standardized metrics will be developed to track language service delivery, access and utilization, and outcomes for LEP populations, enabling the State to assess progress and identify persistent gaps.

IV. Conclusion

The State's language access approach is informed by federal requirements, state and local best practices, and input from community partners. The Maryland Language Advisory Board continues to incorporate expertise from government, advocacy organizations, and subject matter experts to ensure that implementation reflects the needs of Maryland residents.

Maryland has taken a significant step forward in advancing equitable access to public services through HB 1473. The work completed in FY2026 has established a strong foundation for implementation. As we move into FY2027, MLAB's focus will shift from planning to action, ensuring that every agency is equipped, supported, and accountable in delivering meaningful language access.