


F R O M	Name & Title	Mary Beth Haller, Interim Commissioner of Health	Health Department AGENCY REPORT	
	Agency Name & Address	Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202		
	Subject/ Position	24-0584 - Baltimore City Government Entities - Language Access Favorable with Amendment		

To: President and Members
of the City Council
c/o 409 City Hall

October 23, 2024

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) appreciates the opportunity to review Council Bill 24-0584, entitled “Baltimore City Government Entities - Language Access.” The bill expands and codifies the City’s existing language access policy. Specifically, it outlines requirements for City agencies, offices, and organizations that administer publicly-funded programs that deliver direct public services. These requirements include, but are not limited to:

- Designating at least 1 employee to serve as a “language access liaison.”
- In consultation with the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs (MIMA), developing, publishing, and implementing, a “language access plan.”
- Translating all “vital documents,” including web content, into “designated Citywide languages.” Currently, those languages are Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, French, and Korean.
- Making oral language services available to limited English proficient (LEP) individuals seeking to participate in agency programs or services.

BCHD has designated a language access liaison, who has been working to implement the requirements outlined in the bill. Translation of documents is facilitated by MIMA, who has coordinated a vendor contract for translation and interpretation services.

BCHD is in favor of ensuring all Baltimore City residents – regardless of language proficiency – have access to City programs and services. The purpose of this bill aligns with the agency’s mission, which is “to protect health, eliminate disparities, and enhance the wellbeing of everyone in our community through education, coordination, advocacy, and direct service delivery.” However, BCHD recommends an amendment to clarify that agencies must only translate documents that have been produced by the City, as opposed to other entities (such as the State or Federal government). This aligns with MIMA’s practices, which are to translate only documents that have been produced by the City. Updating the bill language to reflect the City’s practices will ensure agencies are able to comply. This is of great importance to BCHD, as an agency that uses many State and Federal forms that are not the City’s property. As such, BCHD respectfully requests a **favorable with amendment report** on Council Bill 24-0583.