



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

## NY Senate Passes Hoylman Legislation to Translate State Agency Websites for Non-English Speakers

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL May 3, 2021

| ISSUE: **SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN, SD 27, LANGUAGE ACCESS, COMBATING COVID-19**

**NEW YORK** - Today, the New York State Senate unanimously passed legislation ([S.4716-A/A.6215-A](#)) to require state agency websites to provide translation into the top 12 languages spoken by New York State residents, sponsored by State Senator Brad Hoylman (D/WF-Manhattan) and Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou (D/WF-Manhattan). The bill requires state agencies to provide translation services for all COVID-19 information within 30 days, and all state agency websites within 90 days. The legislation is especially important for immigrant communities who have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 crisis..

**Senator Hoylman said:** “Every single New Yorker should be able to access information about COVID-19, negotiate housing information, and utilize government services related to pandemic recovery, but right now if you can’t read English you are out of luck. More than five million New Yorkers live in households where the primary language isn’t English. That’s why we can’t let language be a barrier to life-saving information, especially during this pandemic. New York’s immigrant communities have suffered enough the last 14 months, we must make sure non-English speakers have full access to all parts of our state’s robust recovery plan. I’m proud to partner with Assemblymember Niou on this important legislation and grateful that Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart Cousins is prioritizing

this effort to make government sites easier to navigate for millions of our neighbors.”

**Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou said:** “Language assistance services are the difference between existing in a place and truly feeling that you belong. With this bill, Senator Hoylman has sent a message to the 4 million New Yorkers who speak one of the top 12 world languages: you belong here. That should be our goal in everything we do as lawmakers, and this legislation embodies those values.”

**Carlyn Cowen, Chief Policy and Public Affairs Officer of Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC) said:** “CPC is thrilled that the State Agency Website Translation Access bill has passed in the State Senate. Language accessible materials have been crucial and remain to be more essential than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout this health crisis, we have seen first hand from our community members that linguistically isolated households do not receive COVID-19 updates, CDC guidelines, and social distancing recommendations in a timely manner, which has led to a higher COVID-19 exposure risk in immigrant neighborhoods, and now a uneven vaccine rollout. We are grateful for the efforts of Senator Hoylman and Assemblymember Niou to pass this important bill and look forward to seeing this bill be passed in the Assembly.”

Assemblymember Niou and Senator Hoylman’s legislation would require State agency websites to provide translation into the 12 most common non-English languages spoken by New Yorkers. Under the bill, state agencies would have 30 days to translate all COVID-19 related websites and 90 days for all other websites.

More than 5.6 million New Yorkers live in households where English is not the primary language; many of them are part of communities that have been disproportionately hit by the COVID-19 crisis, including new immigrants and people of color. Many New Yorkers lack access to critical services, and the language barrier prevents them from accessing the

necessary information to apply for unemployment insurance, find food distribution centers, and access life-saving human services. This bill will greatly increase the accessibility of our agency websites to better support and reflect the diverse, inclusive communities of New York State.

###