

For Immediate Release: June 13, 2024

Senator Iwen Chu Bill to Expand Language Access Across New York State Public Services Passes Senate

(Albany, NY) Last week, the New York State Senate passed legislation ([S9754](#)), sponsored by Senator Iwen Chu, to expand language access and translations in everyday interactions with State government. This bill strengthens the current law requiring all state agencies providing direct public services to translate all vital materials into the 12 most common languages spoken by New Yorkers.

Nearly 50% of all households in Brooklyn speak a language other than English at home, including Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Yiddish, Korean, and Haitian Creole. With this bill, New York will remain a place where all people, of all backgrounds, can access the services they are entitled to from their government.

Senator Iwen Chu said, “There is a reason why the U.S. doesn't have an official language. We are defined by our linguistic diversity, and especially here in New York, believe that people of all backgrounds should be able to live and participate in this society. Ensuring that everyone can access the resources afforded to them throughout various government agencies is fundamental to that mission. That’s why I am proud to champion this effort that improves language access in our state’s services. As a public servant representing a largely immigrant community, I work everyday to help people navigate critical state resources—especially if they are non-English speaking. This bill will help in that effort, and better ensure that all New Yorkers have the necessary tools to understand, engage with, and receive vital government services and civic life.”

Key provisions of Senator Chu’s bill include:

- ***Expanding Translation for New Immigrants:*** The bill requires that the 12 most common languages now include those spoken by immigrants who have arrived in New York within the last five years, ensuring that recent arrivals receive the support they need.

- ***Regional Considerations for Language Access:*** State agencies would also translate materials into three additional languages selected based on the most common languages spoken within each region, addressing the unique linguistic diversity of local communities.
- ***Streamlining and Improving Complaint Processes:*** The legislation mandates that agencies include a phone number or email address in their language access plans for the public to submit complaints regarding noncompliance with New York’s language laws and publicize resolutions. This ensures greater accountability and responsiveness.
- ***New Language Access Requirements for Authorities and Counties:*** Certain state authorities and counties would be required to develop comprehensive language access plans. These plans must include translations of vital documents into the 12 most common languages, plus three additional regional languages, to better serve diverse populations.