

**Senate State, Veterans, & Military Affairs**

**04/29/2025 02:00 PM**

**HB25-1153 Statewide Gov Language Access Assessment**

**Typed Text of Testimony Submitted**

<b>Name, Position, Representing</b>	<b>Typed Text of Testimony</b>
<p>Joshua Stallings For Juntos Community</p>	<p>Thank you, Chair Weissman, and members of the committee for considering this bill and listening to my testimony today. My name is Josh Stallings, and I am the Program Manager of Advocacy with Juntos Community, based in Denver, Colorado.</p> <p>On behalf of our organization and as an ally of the Interim Language Access working group, I strongly support Bill HB 25-1153: Statewide Government Language Access Assessment because it is a critical step toward ensuring equitable language access for all community members in Colorado.</p> <p>Juntos Community is a nonprofit that is working with immigrants around Colorado to overcome barriers to career mobility. Many immigrants in our state possess valuable skills and are ready to contribute to essential sectors such as healthcare, education, and childcare. However, language barriers often prevent them from accessing information about professional licensure, applying for professional licenses and taking license exams. This limits both their opportunities and the state’s workforce capacity.</p> <p>Last year at Juntos Community, we asked 177 immigrants and refugees in Colorado to fill out a survey to learn more about their experience seeking professional licenses in the state. We found that 39% of people reported that language barriers prevented them from obtaining professional licenses or permits in Colorado. Of that 39% facing language barriers, 68% of respondents faced language barriers when trying to access licensing information from government agencies, and 42% faced barriers during the application or exam process.</p> <p>These challenges occur at multiple points along the path to employment and are a significant obstacle to professional advancement. Removing these language barriers would not only provide career opportunities for these Coloradans, but also strengthen Colorado’s workforce altogether. By including our community members and the diversity of languages they speak, we add great talent, and much-needed linguistic and cultural skills to fields like early childhood education, nursing, and mental health care.</p>

	<p>I urge you to vote YES on HB 25-1153: Statewide Government Language Access Assessment!</p>
<p>Ana Coronado For themselves</p>	<p>Thank you, Chair Weissman, and members of the committee for considering this bill and listening to my testimony today. My name is Ana Coronado, and I am currently serving as an intern with the Juntos Community, based in Denver, Colorado.</p> <p>As an ally of the Interim Language Access working group, I strongly support Bill HB 25-1153: Statewide Government Language Access Assessment, it's a key start to equitable language access for all community members. In Colorado, it was found that at least 300,000 people use a language other than English to communicate effectively. In a globalized world we should be making space for all the diverse languages that our community members use.</p> <p>Growing up, I was always assigned to help translate for my mother. I remember times when my 10-year-old self didn't understand the meaning behind words or how to phrase things from English to Spanish or vice versa. But I had no choice in many places my mother and I visited, there was no language access. I remember going into the Adams County Human Service Center not knowing what we were there for, but one thing I knew for certain was that we were asking for food assistance. My mother didn't know how to speak English, but she could understand a bit when spoken to. I had to communicate between her and the front desk worker, and I felt pressured to translate perfectly because a mistake could risk us from not getting the help we needed. It was crucial for me to stand up and get the help we needed by being a translator.</p> <p>This scenario, as well as many others, taught me that it's crucial for us to have language access. There's no reason a child should feel so much pressure to translate correctly just to ensure their family has food on the table. Language access matters for safety, dignity, and inclusiveness. Everyone should have the right to communicate in the language most effective for them. This would avoid information from getting lost in translation, further steps being misunderstood, and families risking hunger.</p> <p>I urge you to say YES to Bill HB 25-1153: Statewide Government Language Access Assessment. Let's ensure no one in our community suffers from language access barriers. Everyone should receive assistance effectively at every Colorado agency they visit. These agencies are established to help our community but how can they do that if language access remains a barrier?</p>
<p>Vanessa Lupercio Martinez For Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning</p>	<p>Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, for considering this bill and for listening to our testimony today.</p> <p>My name is Vanessa Lupercio, I live in Bennett, Colorado, and I work as a coordinator for a program at the Spring Institute that supports internationally trained healthcare professionals like myself.</p>

	<p>Two years ago, I came to the United States as an internationally trained medical graduate. While I've always had confidence in my skills as a healthcare professional, facing language barriers here was a challenge that shook that confidence. Like many others, I've experienced the frustration and isolation that comes from not fully understanding or being understood, especially when it comes to something as important as healthcare or professional re-licensure.</p> <p>When you can't access information in a language you understand, it feels like you're always one step behind. I know firsthand how essential it is to have access to services in a language that allows you to make informed decisions about your health, your career, and your future. It's disheartening to feel excluded from opportunities simply because of a language barrier, but I'm encouraged by the thought that this bill can help change that for so many people.</p> <p>This is why I strongly support House Bill 25-1153 on language access. The lack of language services not only affects people's ability to access healthcare, but it also keeps them from contributing fully to their communities, whether in their jobs, education, or everyday life. This bill is a step toward ensuring that everyone, regardless of the language they speak, can access vital services with dignity and understanding.</p> <p>I respectfully ask you to vote in favor of HB25-1153. Passing this bill will ensure that Coloradans who speak languages other than English are not left behind. It will allow us to thrive, contribute, and fully integrate into the communities we're proud to be a part of.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and consideration.</p>
<p>Summer Laws For Boulder County</p>	<p>Dear Chair Weissman and members of the committee,</p> <p>Boulder County respectfully requests your aye vote in support of HB 25-1135 Statewide Government Language Access Assessment.</p> <p>As we commemorate more than 60 years since the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, we reflect on Colorado's progress in ensuring equal rights and access for all individuals, regardless of their linguistic background. In that reflection Boulder County finds it essential to recognize the gaps, particularly in providing meaningful access to services in Colorado for populations with limited English proficiency.</p> <p>HB25-1135 is common sense legislation, developed with significant stakeholder input, to implement best practices in addressing language access gaps within state government. Boulder County has engaged in a similar assessment and is currently implementing the recommendations from those findings.</p> <p>Many thanks to Senator Jodeh for her sponsorship of this bill and thank you committee members for your consideration of Boulder County's input on HB25-1135.</p>

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April 29, 2025

Senator Mike Weissman, Chair  
Senator Tom Sullivan, Vice Chair  
Colorado Senate State, Veterans, & Military Affairs Committee

*RE: Small Business Majority's support for HB25-1153*

My name is Hunter Nelson and I'm the Colorado Director for Small Business Majority, a small business organization with a mission to empower America's diverse entrepreneurs to build a thriving and equitable economy. I'm pleased to provide testimony in support of HB25-1153, legislation that would require the department of personnel, in collaboration with the Office of New Americans, to conduct or contract to conduct a statewide language access assessment. The assessment covers all principal departments except the department of state, the department of the treasury, and the department of law.

Around [900,000](#) Coloradans speak a language other than English at home. While this is a largely Spanish speaking population, the prevalence of other languages like Mandarin, Cantonese, Amharic and Vietnamese is also growing. The population of Coloradans with 'limited English proficiency' is growing and includes individuals who were born in Colorado, immigrants who are naturalized citizens, and noncitizens with a variety of immigration statuses. Regardless of their language backgrounds, many Coloradans need to interface with state agencies.

This includes startup and established business owners who are seeking to start and grow their business while complying with state laws. For instance, entrepreneurs need to interface with the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) for occupational licensing, the Office of Economic Development & International Trade (OEDIT) for programs related to business support and accessing capital and the Colorado Department of Labor & Employment (CDLE) for workforce needs and support. Interacting with these state agencies is already complicated for many small business owners, and the language barrier for non-English speaking entrepreneurs only exacerbates any difficulties.

This legislation would allow our state agencies to best determine how they can meet the diverse language needs of all Coloradans and implement best practices to increase accessibility. Immigrants account for [13%](#) of Colorado's entrepreneurs and even though many immigrants speak English, many do not. It's important that we support them as they interact with different state agencies to navigate their business operations. We urge you to pass HB25-1153 so that all entrepreneurs, regardless of their native language, can more easily start and grow their small businesses as they contribute to our economy.

Sincerely,

Hunter Nelson  
Colorado Director  
Small Business Majority



*April 29, 2025*

*To: Chair Weissman, Vice Chair Sullivan, and members of the State, Civic, Military, & Veterans Affairs Committee*

*From: Victoria Francis, Deputy Director, State and Local Initiatives, American Immigration Council*

**Re: HB25-1153: Statewide Government Language Access Assessment**

Dear Chair Weissman, Vice Chair Sullivan, and members of the State, Civic, Military, & Veterans Affairs Committee,

My name is Victoria Francis, and I am the Deputy Director of State and Local Initiatives at the American Immigration Council (the Council) and a Colorado resident. The Council works to create a more welcoming America—one that provides a fair immigration process for New Americans and adopts policies that consider the vital contributions they make to the U.S. economy.

I am submitting this letter in strong support of HB25-1153: Statewide Government Language Access Assessment, which would require the Department of Personnel, in collaboration with the Office of New Americans, to conduct a statewide language access assessment of all principal departments. This assessment, its identification of needs, and subsequent recommendations are crucial steps in ensuring all residents of Colorado, including its immigrant residents, can meaningfully access essential government services and fulfill their full potential as residents of the state.

Through past legislation, Colorado has already laid the groundwork for language accessibility. According to my organization's research, dozens of immigrant-related bills or bills referencing immigrant communities have been introduced in Colorado in the last decade, with many focusing on improving language accessibility and addressing language barriers. While these bills have undoubtedly improved language accessibility in the state, a statewide government language access assessment is essential to ensure that these previous investments are fully realized. By identifying and addressing gaps in the services provided, Colorado will maximize the impact of previously passed legislation, benefiting all Colorado residents.

To help illustrate why this issue is important and why it is imperative that Colorado work towards increasing accessibility to essential government programs, services, and information, in the state of Colorado for limited English proficiency populations, my organization conducted quantitative research using data from the 2022 American Community Survey to highlight the contributions immigrants and

refugees make in Colorado. Our research<sup>1</sup> shows that **Colorado is home to a sizable and strong community of over 557,000 immigrants and refugees, making up about 9.5 percent—or nearly one in ten residents—of the state’s population.**

Over a third of immigrant residents in Colorado were from Mexico, making up the largest country of origin for immigrant residents, followed by India, Korea, China, and Ethiopia, which each comprised around 3.0 percent of the immigrant population in the state. Of these immigrant residents, 79.0 percent were proficient in English, meaning more than 20.0 percent could significantly benefit from language assistance to access government programs, services, and information. This linguistic diversity underscores the importance of a statewide government language access assessment to systematically evaluate and address any gaps in services for limited English-proficient populations.

Additionally, our research reveals the striking impact immigrants and refugees have on Colorado’s economy and workforce,<sup>2</sup> further illustrating the need to ensure all residents can access government services, programs, and information:

- Colorado’s immigrant community is critical to the state’s future workforce: **82.5 percent of immigrants in Colorado are of working age** (16-64 years of age) compared to 64.4 percent of their U.S.-born counterparts.
- **Colorado’s immigrant residents paid over \$6.6 billion in taxes in 2022 — including \$2.0 billion in state and local taxes** — and held \$19.1 billion in spending power that can be reinjected back into the state’s economy.
- **Over one in ten of the state’s entrepreneurs are immigrants.** As business owners, immigrants are an integral part of Colorado’s diverse and thriving business community. They help create jobs and employ numerous Colorado residents.
- **Immigrants comprise over one in ten workers in the state’s labor force.** Colorado’s immigrant residents were crucial in numerous important industries and occupations, such as healthcare. In fact, immigrants made up 21.6 percent, or over one-fifth of the state’s health aides, 11.2 percent of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) workers, and 16.4 percent of postsecondary teachers.

Colorado will take an important stride forward toward helping all its residents achieve their full potential by conducting a statewide government language access assessment. Ensuring meaningful access to essential programs, services, and information helps promote the successful integration of its immigrant residents and furthers the well-being of all Coloradans. I encourage you to support the passage of HB25-1153.

Thank you for your consideration,

Victoria Francis  
Deputy Director, State and Local Initiatives  
American Immigration Council

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/locations/colorado/#>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, my name is Morgan Turner and I serve as the Director of Community Engagement at Colorado Center on Law and Policy, an antipoverty organization advancing the rights of every Coloradan. I am submitting written testimony in support of HB25-1153, which aims to establish clear standards for effective language access in state agencies and state-funded programs. This bill will also assess current language access efforts, helping agencies to meet these standards and improve systems to ensure that all Coloradans, regardless of the language they speak, have access to essential information.

Though Colorado has taken action steps to improve language access within state agencies, these efforts have lacked consistency, with some state agencies investing in and implementing language access practices, while others have not. According to the Migration Policy Institute, over 300,000 individuals in Colorado are limited English proficient. Without adequate language access services, over 300,000 individuals are excluded from state services, programs, and information that affect their everyday lives. This exclusion continues the cycle of marginalization where entire communities are unable to access critical resources such as healthcare, transportation, workforce, and public benefits.

When language access services are not provided, Coloradans who speak a language other than English commonly rely on family members, including their own children to act as interpreters or translators. This responsibility is inefficient and burdensome, especially if the information is complex. It is also important to consider that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act requires recipients of federal funding to ensure eligible community members are not denied access to programs or services based on a lack of English proficiency.

By investing in language access, you are investing in Colorado. Making it a state that is committed to inclusivity and enhancing the ability for Coloradans with different language backgrounds to better navigate available public resources. HB25-1153 serves as an opportunity to improve language access within state agencies. All Coloradans deserve to communicate about their rights, responsibilities and public services. This bill will serve as a first step toward better serving Coloradans who speak languages other than English, streamlining cross-agency language access efforts, and ultimately maximize the impact of state programs. We urge you to vote in support of the bill.

Thank you for your consideration,

Morgan Turner



<https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb25-1153>

Concerning a statewide language access assessment covering principal departments.

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Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the Committee.

My name is Chase Cowne; I'm the Policy Intern for Colorado Common Cause, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that works for open, honest, and accountable government and seeks to strengthen public participation in civic life.

I am here to speak in support of HB 25-1153.

The Statewide Government Language Access Assessment would continue to provide support for the democratic principle that all voices deserve an equal opportunity to understand and participate in the laws of our state. But equal opportunity and ability to participate can only happen when the languages spoken by the people are acknowledged in our institutions.

With over 300,000 individuals in Colorado having limited English proficiency, systemic linguistic barriers frequently undermine their ability to access government services & programs.

This is not just crucial to ensuring that communities across the state can access the countless services, information, and opportunities provided, but it's also necessary for all Coloradans to be able to fully participate in our state's democracy, economy, and community.

By accurately assessing how our government institutions are providing equitable access to civic engagement, Coloradans with lower English proficiency can still have the same opportunities as many of us in this room. One should not have to overcome that barrier to see and be seen by their government.

Over ¼ of children in Colorado have at least one parent who speaks a language other than English. We have an obligation to empower these families and communities by assessing language barriers that hinder the ability for people to engage and HB1153 would allow this to happen.

When we build systems to not just allow, but welcome new voices into our civic conversations, it leads to a stronger and more responsive state.

We urge you to vote in favor of this legislation to continue to strengthen Colorado's institutions and the voices of our communities.

Thank you for your time.

### **Why is this necessary?**

Navigating government departments & services is often complicated, especially so when you struggle with English proficiency and understanding where to find the resources you're looking for.

This bill provides a path to resolving this issue by assessing how well institutions are providing equitable language support and providing assistance to these departments if they fall short. This bill would continue to promote civic participation, a core component in our democratic society.

### **Why do we need to cater to every single person who speaks a language other than English?**

This bill only creates an advisory committee to analyze where we're at as a state in terms of language accessibility, report their findings, and make potential recommendations on improving access.

It'll be up to the legislature to make determinations on how to address those findings.

### **Why should we be spending money on a DEI program that doesn't actually do anything!**

>> do your best to not engage with this...

“Coloradans deserve the freedom to be able to access and understand all the information and services that are available. This bill only serves to create a pathway to reinforce that freedom for constituents across the state.”



## **HB25-1153: Statewide Government Language Access Assessment**

Hunger Free Colorado position: FOR

### **Chair and members of the committee:**

My name is Jordan Lamport, and I work on SNAP outreach and policy at Hunger Free Colorado. Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for HB-1153. At Hunger Free Colorado, we connect people to food resources to meet immediate needs and drive policy, systems, and social change to end hunger. From my work helping people access food and nutrition programs, I know that language access is a key part of food access and that ensuring comprehensive services for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) communities is an important goal for Colorado to continue advancing.

Because language barriers are manifold and commonly observed in social services settings, a complete language-access assessment is an important first step towards identifying how government agencies can best mitigate issues often experienced by LEP Coloradans when engaging with essential programs.

As a statewide nonprofit supporting nutrition programs like SNAP and WIC, both of which have distinct and complex eligibility rules and program guidelines, our outreach teams see firsthand how important multilingual communication strategies and materials are to keep LEP communities informed and to counter confusion, misinformation, and dissuasion among eligible households. Conversely, we also see how a lack of available multilingual resources can silo communities and create barriers for community-based organizations that work to disseminate information widely to an audience of many languages.

Hunger Free Colorado partners with the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) to provide accessible language services and contracts with language experts to provide translation and interpretation. For example, our Client Services Department is fully bilingual in English and Spanish and offers interpretation in 150+ languages and bilingual outreach materials, but, this is not possible for lots of community organizations that often get called upon to provide language access support for public services beyond their scope and capacity. Food pantries, for example, often serve diverse populations but need more support to reach people in their preferred language.

And so, despite progress at the agency level, gaps remain at the community level. HB-1153 presents an opportunity to assess current language access standards across agencies and sectors and develop guidance to minimize barriers for all service providers. Additionally, we believe that implementation of HB-1153 will lead to positive outcomes like reducing common myths and



misconceptions around eligibility for public benefits among immigrant and refugee communities and concretizing guidance on AI translation for government and nonprofits.

Lastly HB-1153 provides for the creation of a “community of practice” comprised of language experts, community members, and government to support the implementation of assessment recommendations. This is a crucial element of the program which allows community input to shape the future of language access. In this spirit, certified language instructor and contractor with Hunger Free Colorado, Francisco Miraval shared with us why HB-1153 would be most impactful in his view:

*“In my work as a professional translator and community outreach consultant, I regularly assist individuals navigating access to services and resources, including food assistance. I have witnessed how language barriers can mean the difference between a family receiving timely assistance or giving up in frustration. Even when translated resources exist, sometimes they are difficult to locate, inconsistently translated, or lack proper cultural contextualization to be relevant. As someone directly involved in language access on the ground, I know how much this bill is needed. HB-1153 is an essential step toward identifying and addressing these gaps, not only at the agency level but where it matters most—at the community level. A clear, inclusive language access policy will help ensure no one is excluded from vital services simply because of the language they speak.”*

This is an important step toward strengthening language access across government services, and I urge a yes vote. Thank you.

Jordan Lamport

Applied Policy & Economic Justice Coordinator, Hunger Free Colorado

[jordan@hungerfreecolorado.org](mailto:jordan@hungerfreecolorado.org)



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This is an important step toward strengthening language access across government services, and I urge a yes vote. Thank you.

Jordan Lamport

Applied Policy & Economic Justice Coordinator, Hunger Free Colorado

[jordan@hungerfreecolorado.org](mailto:jordan@hungerfreecolorado.org)