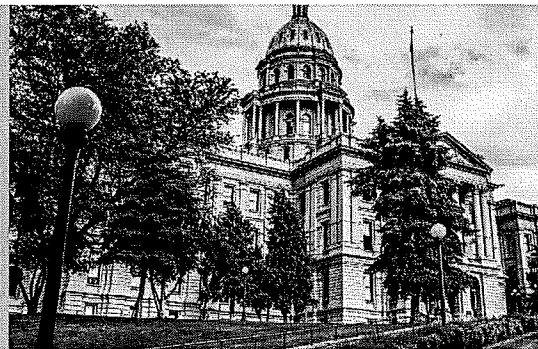


# HB24-1368

## Language Access Advisory Board

ENHANCING LANGUAGE ACCESS IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Prime Sponsors: Representative Mandy Lindsay  
& Representative Elizabeth Velasco



### Language Access as a Driver of Civic Engagement

In recent years, Colorado has taken meaningful steps to expand language access promoting inclusive civic engagement. In 2021, HB21-1011 - Multilingual Ballot Access For Voters increased multilingual access to the ballot. Just this year, the General Assembly adopted a policy to provide certain interpretation services during public testimony. While these changes represent progress in the right direction, **language access in civic engagement continues to fall short**. The General Assembly website – including bill summaries, testimony sign-up, and other critical information – is available only in English. During the 2024 session, the budget for interpretation at the Capitol is limited and only covers interpretation during verbal public testimony. (It does not, for example, extend interpretation to persons who wish to listen to committee or floor proceedings.) Given these continued gaps, more work needs to be done.

### Why Should We Care?

Census data shows that more than 300,000 Coloradans have limited English proficiency (LEP). This amounts to over 5 percent of the state's total population, and includes 90,000 persons who speak languages other than English or Spanish. Notably, this population reflects people of all citizenship statuses; nearly a third of all naturalized citizens in the state are LEP. Given this demographic breakdown, **language access related to civic engagement affects many, not few, and should be prioritized accordingly**.

Under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, federally-funded institutions must make their services reasonably accessible to all LEP individuals. While the Colorado General Assembly does not technically fall under this rule – its funding stems primarily from general funds – **HB24-1368 gives Colorado an opportunity to be a leader in language access by ensuring an inclusive legislative branch that better taps into the range of ideas, expertise, and perspectives in our linguistically vibrant state**.

Not only will improved language access benefit LEP residents, it will **create a healthier, more robust, and more effective democracy**. The Colorado legislature serves *everyone* across our linguistically diverse state, no matter what language they speak. It is the People's House. Yet thousands of Coloradans are denied access to their own government and full participation in democracy. It's time to fix this.

Strengthen our democracy by supporting HB24-1368.

**HB24-1368 will help ensure that the legislative branch of our state government is accessible to and usable by every Coloradan.**

### What the bill does:

- Creates a **Language Access Advisory Board** that will explore and develop recommendations for improved language access within the legislative process
- Designs the Language Access Advisory Board to include community representatives and legislators of both parties
- Requires that the Board produce final recommendations by December 15, 2024

HB24-1368 is supported by a broad array of stakeholders, including members of the Colorado Language Access Coalition (CLAC). For more information, contact CLAC:

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