

ALC Applauds Historic U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Report Affirming Language Access as a Gateway Right

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The Association of Language Companies (the ALC) welcomes the release of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights report, [Language Access for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency](#), a landmark examination of language access as a civil rights issue in the United States.

The report, the culmination of a year-long investigation, examines the barriers faced by individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) when accessing federally operated and federally funded services, including healthcare, public benefits, food assistance, schools, courts, law enforcement, and other essential government programs.

Approved through a rare unanimous bipartisan vote, the report provides findings and recommendations to the President and Congress aimed at strengthening meaningful language access nationwide. Among its recommendations, the Commission calls on Congress to consider codifying Executive Order 13166 Improving

Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (August 11, 2000) into federal law to ensure meaningful access for individuals with limited English proficiency in federally operated



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and federally funded programs.

The report also recommends that congressional legislation establishes a tailored framework for determining when language assistance should be provided. That framework would consider the number or proportion of LEP individuals in the eligible service population, how frequently LEP individuals interact with the program, the importance of the benefit or encounter, the consequences of inadequate interpretation or translation, and the resources and costs associated with providing language services.

Additional recommendations include translating vital documents and mission-critical public materials into languages frequently encountered by federal agencies and dominant languages spoken in the United States, developing systems to identify and track spoken and written language needs, providing staff training, using qualified interpreters and translators, and applying appropriate quality controls for machine translation and artificial intelligence.

“The ALC, which represents the industry that provides language access, recognizes the importance of this report at a time when language access has come under increasing scrutiny,” said Josh Pennise, President of the Association of Language Companies. “We are proud of the ALC members and language access leaders who testified before the Commission and provided feedback throughout the development of this report.”

The Commission’s report identifies recurring challenges that continue to affect language access nationwide, including inconsistent implementation across programs and communities, limited data on language needs, insufficient use of available language tools, difficulty securing interpreters for less commonly spoken languages, overreliance on machine translation, and the use of untrained interpreters, including family members and children.

“This report represents a significant step toward the full realization of language access as a necessary gateway right, upon which access to many other civil rights depends,” said Dr. Bill Rivers, the ALC Advocacy Consultant and Honorary Lifetime Member, who [testified before the Commission in March 2025](#).

Shamus Sayed, CEO of Interpreters Unlimited and an ALC member leader involved in the process, emphasized the long-term importance of the Commission’s work.

“The impact of this report will be generational,” said Sayed.

The ALC continues to advocate before Congress for policies, funding, and legislative frameworks that strengthen language access and support the language services sector across the United States. The Association appreciates the Commission’s work and urges policymakers to act on the report’s recommendations.

About ALC:

The Association of Language Companies (ALC) is the national trade association for interpreting, translation, localization, language education, and language service providers serving the U.S. market. The industry supports more than \$30B in annual economic impact and a workforce of more than 60,000 linguists, interpreters, and language professionals nationwide. The ALC strengthens the industry through advocacy, research, and collaboration, promoting high-quality, accessible language services across critical sectors.

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