

**Testimony of the New York Immigration Coalition
In Support of Language Access Legislation**

My name is Ivan Larios and I am the Long Island Manager of Member Engagement for the New York Immigration Coalition. Thank you for allowing the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) to testify today on the vital issue of language access that affects our county's immigrant communities.

On behalf of the New York Immigration Coalition, a statewide organization representing over 200 non-profit organizations who work with immigrant New Yorkers, we write to urge you to strongly support the codification of the Statewide Language Access Executive Order 26

The New York Immigration Coalition is supporting state-wide codification and expansion of Language Access services. Lack of language access is one of the most significant barriers New York's immigrant communities face to accessing critical State services. New York State took an important step toward expanding language access when Governor Cuomo signed Executive Order No. 26 in 2011, which orders all executive State agencies to translate vital documents into the six most common state languages (Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Korean, Haitian Creole, and Bengali) and to offer interpretation services to individuals in their primary language. However, even after the implementation of the Executive Order, significant language access barriers remain, many of which have been made even more apparent by COVID-19 and our statewide response to it. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted nearly every aspect of our lives and has reached into nearly every community in our state. Our ability to keep one another safe and healthy depends on every New Yorker having access to credible, trusted information about how to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the types of supports and services available, and how to comply with federal, state and local orders. We know certain communities are disproportionately impacted by this pandemic and one way we can shift that injustice is by meeting our obligation to communicate in ways that are accessible and culturally- and linguistically relevant.

Under the current Executive Order, the languages that vital documents are translated into do not include a single language of the African continent or the Middle East. This represents a failure to reflect the State's growing population of individuals from those regions. Under our proposed expansion, the number of languages covered would be doubled.

On behalf of the New York Immigration Coalition, we look forward to both the passage and proper implementation of this legislation. The only way for New York to truly have a full and equitable recovery it must include our immigrant communities and without language access that is not possible.