

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2018

To allow the Department of Housing and Urban Development to better serve persons with limited proficiency in the English language by providing technical assistance to recipients of Federal funds.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 5, 2007

Mr. MENENDEZ introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To allow the Department of Housing and Urban Development to better serve persons with limited proficiency in the English language by providing technical assistance to recipients of Federal funds.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. ACCESS TO HUD PROGRAMS FOR PERSONS**
4 **WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY.**

5 (a) HUD RESPONSIBILITIES.—To allow the Depart-
6 ment of Housing and Urban Development to better serve
7 persons with limited proficiency in the English language
8 by providing technical assistance to recipients of Federal

1 funds, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development
2 shall take the following actions:

3 (1) TASK FORCE.—Within 90 days after the
4 date of enactment of this Act, convene a task force
5 comprised of appropriate industry groups, recipients
6 of funds from the Department of Housing and
7 Urban Development (in this section referred to as
8 the “Department”), community-based organizations
9 that serve individuals with limited English pro-
10 ficiency, civil rights groups, and stakeholders, which
11 shall identify a list of vital documents, including De-
12 partment and certain property and other documents,
13 to be competently translated to improve access to
14 federally conducted and federally assisted programs
15 and activities for individuals with limited English
16 proficiency. The task force shall meet not less fre-
17 quently than twice per year.

18 (2) TRANSLATIONS.—Within 6 months after
19 identification of documents pursuant to paragraph
20 (1), produce translations of the documents identified
21 in all necessary languages and make such trans-
22 lations available as part of the library of forms avail-
23 able on the website of the Department and as part
24 of the clearinghouse developed pursuant to para-
25 graph (4).

1 (3) PLAN.—Develop and carry out a plan that
2 includes providing resources of the Department to
3 assist recipients of Federal funds to improve access
4 to programs and activities for individuals with lim-
5 ited English proficiency, which plan shall include the
6 elements described in paragraph (4).

7 (4) HOUSING INFORMATION RESOURCE CEN-
8 TER.—Develop and maintain a housing information
9 resource center to facilitate the provision of lan-
10 guage services by providers of housing services to in-
11 dividuals with limited English proficiency. Informa-
12 tion provided by such center shall be made available
13 in printed form and through the Internet. The re-
14 sources provided by the center shall include the fol-
15 lowing:

16 (A) TRANSLATION OF WRITTEN MATE-
17 RIALS.—The center may provide, directly or
18 through contract, vital documents from com-
19 petent translation services for providers of
20 housing services.

21 (B) TOLL-FREE CUSTOMER SERVICE TELE-
22 PHONE NUMBER.—The center shall provide a
23 24-hour toll-free interpretation service tele-
24 phone line, by which recipients of funds of the

1 Department and individuals with limited
2 English proficiency may—

3 (i) obtain information about federally
4 conducted or federally assisted housing
5 programs of the Department;

6 (ii) obtain assistance with applying for
7 or accessing such housing programs and
8 understanding Federal notices written in
9 English; and

10 (iii) communicate with housing pro-
11 viders, and learn how to access additional
12 language services.

13 The toll-free telephone service provided pursu-
14 ant to this subparagraph shall supplement re-
15 sources in the community identified by the plan
16 developed pursuant to paragraph (3).

17 (C) DOCUMENT CLEARINGHOUSE.—The
18 center shall collect and evaluate for accuracy or
19 develop, and make available, templates and doc-
20 uments that are necessary for consumers, rel-
21 evant industry representatives, and other stake-
22 holders of the Department, to access, make
23 educated decisions, and communicate effectively
24 about their housing, including—

- 1 (i) administrative and property docu-
2 ments;
3 (ii) legally binding documents;
4 (iii) consumer education and outreach
5 materials;
6 (iv) documents regarding rights and
7 responsibilities of any party; and
8 (v) remedies available to consumers.

9 (D) STUDY OF LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE
10 PROGRAMS.—The center shall conduct a study
11 that evaluates best-practices models for all pro-
12 grams of the Department that promote lan-
13 guage assistance and strategies to improve lan-
14 guage services for individuals with limited
15 English proficiency. Not later than 18 months
16 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
17 center shall submit a report to the Committee
18 on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the
19 Senate and the Committee on Financial Serv-
20 ices of the House of Representatives, which
21 shall provide recommendations for implementa-
22 tion, specific to programs of the Department,
23 and information and templates that could be
24 made available to all recipients of grants from
25 the Department.

1 (E) CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC COM-
2 PETENCE MATERIALS.—The center shall pro-
3 vide information relating to culturally and lin-
4 guistically competent housing services for popu-
5 lations with limited English proficiency.

6 (b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
7 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be
8 necessary to carry out subsection (a).

9 (c) REPORT.—Not later than 6 months after the date
10 of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the
11 Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall sub-
12 mit a report regarding its compliance with the require-
13 ments under subsection (a) to the Committee on Banking,
14 Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate and the Com-
15 mittee on Financial Services of the House of Representa-
16 tive.

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