



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

Lost in Translation: A/M Yuh-Line Niou and Senator Brad Hoylman Announce New Legislation to Translate State Agency Websites for Non-English Speakers

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL February 9, 2021

| ISSUE: **COMBATING COVID-19 AND PROTECTING NEW YORKERS , TRANSLATION SERVICES, SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN, SD 27**

ALBANY, NY - This week, Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou and Senator Brad Hoylman introduced new legislation ([A.6215/S.4716](#)) to translate all state agency websites for non-English speakers. The bill requires state agencies to provide translation services for all COVID-19 information within 30 days, and all other websites within 90 days. The legislation is especially important for immigrant communities who have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and, therefore, are often in greater need of life-saving human services.

Assemblymember Niou said: “As the pandemic continues, it is vital that all New Yorkers have the same information and equitable access to COVID-19 updates and essential human services,” said Assemblymember Niou. “For months, we have had constituents call our office requesting information on COVID-19 and resources that they need. Since agency websites are not accessible and hard to navigate, they end up calling our office instead. Because of the lack of language accessibility, we have also had folks reach out with COVID-19 misinformation that has been circulated on the internet or through online chats. There is a

tremendous gap between those who have the resources and ability to access the resources we have available and those who do not. New Yorkers are going through the worst economic and health pandemic in a century. It is essential that we promote equity and provide culturally sensitive, language accessible information and services in our online resources and information, especially when it comes to COVID-19 related issues. Through this bill, New Yorkers will be able to access stabilizing human services that are potentially life-saving. I want to thank Senator Hoylman for working with me on this legislation to better support our community through this ongoing pandemic.”

Senator Hoylman said: “More than five million New Yorkers live in households where the primary language isn’t English. That’s why we can’t let language be a barrier to life-saving information, especially during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Our state government should speak the language of New Yorkers so they can make vaccine appointments, apply for unemployment insurance, negotiate housing information and have access to other vital services provided by the State. I’m proud to partner with Assemblymember Niou on this important new legislation that will make it easier for millions of our neighbors to benefit from New York’s social safety net.”

Assemblymember Niou and Senator Hoylman’s legislation would expand language accessibility technology on State agency websites by requiring them to utilize technology that translates information into the 12 most common non-English languages spoken by New Yorkers. Under the bill, state agencies would have 30 days to translate all COVID-19 related websites and 90 days for all other websites.

More than 5.6 million New Yorkers live in households where English is not the primary language; many of them are part of communities that have been disproportionately hit by the COVID-19 crisis, including new immigrants and people of color. Many New Yorkers lack access to critical services, and the language barrier prevents them from accessing the

necessary information to apply for unemployment insurance, find food distribution centers, and access life-saving human services. This bill will greatly increase the accessibility of our agency websites to better support and reflect the diverse, inclusive communities of New York State.