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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 16, 2025

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Care Lost in Translation

Sen. Martinez criticizes policy limiting hospital's language access for non-English speakers

HAUPPAUGE, N.Y. – New York State Sen. Monica R. Martinez is urging Northwell Health to reconsider its move to eliminate in-person interpreter services at South Shore University Hospital in Bay Shore. The hospital's decision replaces a 22-year team of professional interpreters, who primarily assisted Spanish-speaking patients and others with limited English proficiency, with digital and phone-based interpretation, raising concerns about patient care, communication, and accessibility.

"Communication and inclusivity are essential to quality care," said Sen. Martinez. "Replacing trained, in-person interpreters with digital services compromises patients' access to proper treatment and their trust. Patients who cannot communicate effectively are at risk of receiving incomplete or incorrect medical attention, which undermines health outcomes and the mission of our hospitals."

Martinez said that ensuring patients can communicate with their health care providers is critical to equitable care. "Providing the ability to speak directly with a trained interpreter is essential for patients to make informed decisions and receive care that meets their unique needs," she said.

Language access has been a longstanding priority for Martinez. While serving in the Suffolk County Legislature, she worked to expand translation services across county departments, including the passage of Resolution [261-2018](#), which required key department documents to be translated into six of the top languages spoken in the county.