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S.243

An act relating to distributing funds to the Vermont Language Justice Project

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds that:

(1) Vermont ranks sixth per capita in refugee resettlement;

(2) the Governor has recognized the important role immigrants play in Vermont's economy;

(3) when health information is available in only one language and only in written format, it creates barriers that lead to confusion;

(4) the Vermont Language Justice Project's videos fill a critical gap in patient education, particularly for families with limited English proficiency;

(5) the Vermont Language Justice Project has created and distributed videos pertaining to COVID-19 and COVID-19 testing; the importance of immunizations and how immunizations work; Mpox; preventing mosquito and tick bites; and safety during flood events, hot and cold weather, cyanobacteria outbreaks, wildfires, and more;

(6) the Vermont Language Justice Project's videos are made in 10 to 21 of the languages commonly spoken in Vermont and in collaboration with the Vermont Department of Health;

1           (7) the Vermont Language Justice Project is usually able to respond to a  
2           crisis within 24 hours with information in multiple languages and in multiple  
3           formats, such as written translations, audio files, and videos; and

4           (8) in January 2025, the Vermont Language Justice Project's grant from  
5           the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention abruptly ended, leaving it  
6           to be funded solely through donations from individuals and foundations and  
7           through fee-for-service work.

8           Sec. 2. VERMONT LANGUAGE JUSTICE PROJECT

9           In fiscal year 2027, to the extent funds are appropriated for this purpose, the  
10           Department of Health shall distribute \$150,000.00 to the Vermont Language  
11           Justice Project to prepare informational materials for Vermonters who speak  
12           languages other than English in the event of a disease outbreak or other public  
13           health emergency, including ongoing personal and public health information.

14           Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

15           This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.