

1 S.243

2 Introduced by Senator Gulick

3 Referred to Committee on Health and Welfare

4 Date: January 13, 2026

5 Subject: Health; public health; informational materials; language access

6 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require the

7 Department of Health to distribute funds to the Vermont Language Justice

8 Project for the creation of informational materials related to a disease outbreak

9 or other public health emergency.

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

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

13 ~~Sec. 1. APPROPRIATION; VERMONT LANGUAGE JUSTICE PROJECT~~

14 ~~In fiscal year 2027, \$150,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to~~
15 ~~the Department of Health for distribution to the Vermont Language Justice~~
16 ~~Project to prepare informational materials for Vermonters who speak~~
17 ~~languages other than English in the event of a disease outbreak or other public~~
18 ~~health emergency.~~

19 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

20 ~~This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.~~

~~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;~~
- ~~(7) the Vermont Language Justice Project is usually able to respond to a crisis within 24 hours with information in multiple languages and in multiple formats, such as written translations, audio files, and videos; and~~
- ~~(8) in January 2025, the Vermont Language Justice Project's grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention abruptly ended, leaving it to be funded solely through donations from individuals and foundations and through fee-for-service work.~~

~~Sec. 2. APPROPRIATION, VERMONT LANGUAGE JUSTICE PROJECT~~

~~In fiscal year 2027, \$150,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Health for distribution to the Vermont Language Justice Project to prepare informational materials for Vermonters who speak languages other than English in the event of a disease outbreak or other public health emergency, including ongoing personal and public health information.~~

Sec. 2. VERMONT LANGUAGE JUSTICE PROJECT

~~In fiscal year 2027, to the extent funds are appropriated for this purpose, the Department of Health shall distribute \$150,000.00 to the Vermont Language Justice Project to prepare informational materials for Vermonters who speak languages other than English in the event of a disease outbreak or~~

~~Other public health emergency, including ongoing personal and public health information.~~

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

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

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;
- (7) the Vermont Language Justice Project is usually able to respond to a crisis within 24 hours with information in multiple languages and in multiple formats, such as written translations, audio files, and videos; and
- (8) in January 2025, the Vermont Language Justice Project's grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention abruptly ended, leaving it to be funded solely through donations from individuals and foundations and through fee-for-service work.

Sec. 2. VERMONT LANGUAGE JUSTICE PROJECT

In fiscal year 2027, the Office of Racial Equity may contract with the Vermont Language Justice Project to prepare informational materials at the request of State agencies and departments, as needed, to assist Vermonters who speak languages other than English in the event of a disease outbreak, natural disaster, or other public health emergency, including ongoing personal and public health information. The Department of Buildings and General Services

shall assist the Vermont Language Justice Project as it navigates the process to become added to the State's list of approved contractors.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.