

Office of Racial Equity
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Xusana R. Davis, Executive Director

TO: House Committee on Human Services
FROM: Xusana Davis, Executive Director of Racial Equity
Shayla Livingston, Interim Deputy Commissioner of Health
DATE: May 08, 2026
RE: Testimony of the Office of Racial Equity and the Department of Health on S.243

The Office of Racial Equity (ORE) and the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) believe the funds currently available through the ORE Language Access Plan appropriation could be used to prepare informational materials at the request of State agencies and departments to assist Vermonters who speak languages beyond English in the event of a disease outbreak, natural disaster, or other public health emergency **without the need for any legislation.**

Specifically, the ORE Language Access Plan appropriation is available for the translation of “vital information.” This includes the translation of any information where a member of the public could suffer significant financial, physical, or other harm if they are unable to complete and/or understand the information. Communications during natural disasters or public health emergencies would be considered “vital” and translations would be able to be supported through the use of the ORE Language Access Plan appropriation. However, if the bill moves forward and if the Committee chooses to re-appropriate the specified amount from the Language Access Plan appropriation, we recommend that this proposed one-time appropriation to the Vermont Language Justice Project be re-appropriated to the Office of Purchasing and Contracting (OPC) within the Department of Buildings and General Services so that departments and agencies across state government would have access to these funds for vital translations during natural disasters or public health emergencies. OPC is a dedicated team that manages statewide contracts that permit executive agencies to bill against those contracts, and [currently maintains seven active statewide contracts specifically for translation services.](#)

We are eager to see the State continue to expand its offerings and services related to communication access needs, and are available to provide additional information or insights at the Committee’s request.

Respectfully,



Xusana R. Davis
Office of Racial Equity