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Testimony before the Ways and Means Committee

In SUPPORT of

House Bill 1144- County Boards of Education- Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency

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Enrollment of students who are have limited English language proficiency (LEP) is on the rise in Maryland. In fact, **the enrollment of students with LEP in Maryland's schools has been growing at a rate faster than the national average** (4.9 percentage points as compared to 3.3, respectively). Students with LEP who report speaking Spanish at home represent 51.7% of Maryland's LEP school-age population, which is lower than the national average of 71.8%. More than a fifth (22.7%) of students with LEP in Maryland speak another Indo-European language, as compared to less than a seventh of students with LEP nationally. Additionally, Maryland's proportion of students who speak Asian and Pacific Island languages at home is six percentage points higher in Maryland than the national figure. This means that **making information accessible to students and families who have limited English language proficiency means more than simply translating English materials into Spanish.**

House Bill 1144 will have impacts that are unevenly distributed across the state, which is reflective of the concentration of students who have LEP. The Washington, DC suburbs and the Central Maryland corridor may incur greater costs than jurisdictions in Western Maryland, Southern Maryland, or on the Eastern Shore in complying with HB 1144, **and that is to be expected.**

Ensuring student success requires more than high-quality curriculum and highly-effective educators to disseminate it. Family and community engagement is a critical pillar of whole-child, student-centered approaches to education, and in this age of increased income and social stratification, is simply a best practice. HB 1144 requires county boards of education to make services like oral translation and translation of documents available for individuals with LPE. This is a common-sense measure to ensure that as our demographics change, access to opportunities to engage with a child's education are not diminished. For these reasons, **ACY urges a favorable report on this bill.**