

Date of Hearing: April 8, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

Blanca Rubio, Chair

AB 2360 (Arambula) – As Introduced February 19, 2026

SUBJECT: State agencies: governmental linguistics.

SUMMARY: Existing law requires each state agency to write each document, as defined, that it produces in plain, straightforward language, avoiding technical terms as much as possible, and using a coherent and easily readable style.

This bill would specify that the plain, straightforward language requirement applies to both digital and printed documents. The bill would require each state agency to create, adopt, and post on its internet website a plain language policy that identifies how the state agency will incorporate or strengthen plain language writing and design principles and practices.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Provides each state agency shall write each document that it produces, either digitally or in print, in plain, straightforward language, avoiding technical terms as much as possible, and using a coherent and easily readable style.
- 2) Provides each state agency shall create, adopt, and post on its internet website a plain language policy that identifies how the state agency will incorporate or strengthen plain language writing and design principles and practices.
- 3) Provides within existing personnel and resources, the head of each state agency shall do all of the following:
 - a) Designate one or more senior officials within the state agency to oversee state agency implementation of this measure.
 - b) Communicate the requirements of this measure to the employees of the state agency.
 - c) Establish a process for overseeing the ongoing compliance of the state agency with the requirements of this measure.
 - d) Within existing personnel resources, designate one or more state agency points of contact to receive and respond to public input, questions, comments, or suggestions on state agency implementation of this measure, or on any state agency document that is not easily readable or in plain language.
- 4) States in relation to this measure, the following definitions apply:
 - a) “Plain language” means language that is clear and easily understood by the intended audience, avoids unnecessary legal or technical jargon, and uses words, sentences, and structures that facilitate comprehension and accessibility for common literacy levels, including individuals with disabilities or limited English proficiency.

- b) “State agency” means each department, commission, office, or other administrative agency of state government.
- c) “State agency document” means any contract, form, license, announcement, regulation, manual, memorandum, or any other written communication that is necessary to carry out the state agency’s responsibilities under the law.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires each department, commission, office, or other administrative agency of state government to write each document, as defined, that it produces in plain, straightforward language, avoiding technical terms as much as possible, and using a coherent and easily readable style.
- 2) Defines a state agency document as any contract, form, license, announcement, regulation, manual, memorandum, or any other written communication that is necessary to carry out the agency’s responsibilities under the law.
- 3) Requires every state agency directly involved in the furnishing of information or the rendering of services to the public where contact is made with a substantial number of non-English-speaking people to employ a sufficient number of qualified bilingual persons in public contact positions to ensure provision of information and services to the public in the language of the non-English-speaking person, except as specified.
- 4) Requires every state agency that serves a substantial number of non-English-speaking people and provides materials in English explaining services to also provide the same type of materials in any non-English language spoken by a substantial number of the public served by the agency, as specified.

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill is keyed fiscal by Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Purpose of the bill. According to the author’s office, “Plain language ensures that everyone, including those with cognitive disabilities, limited literacy, or language barriers, can easily find, understand, and use information to meet their needs. If it’s not accessible, it’s not acceptable. AB 2360 improves access and equity by ensuring state communications are clear, consistent, and written in plain language, so all Californians can better understand the laws that affect their lives and participate more fully in government.”

What problem does this bill solve? According to information provided by the author’s office, “All Californians deserve to understand the state laws written for them. AB 2360 will create greater accessibility and opportunity for more equitable participation in government by ensuring communications to the public are written in plain language.”¹

Language that is not plain can cause real harm for Californians trying to navigate state

¹ Harvard University. “Use Plain Language.” *Accessibility.huit.harvard.edu*, 2025, accessibility.huit.harvard.edu/use-plain-language.

agencies and departments. Not understanding government documents is a significant form of administrative burden, directly leading to fewer people benefiting from the support services created to help them. There are currently almost 4 million Californians missing out on critical services, including:

- 1,540,000 uninsured Californians who are eligible for one of California’s public medical insurance plans, including Covered CA or Medi-Cal²
- 240,000 Californians for social services through CalWORKS³
- 1,925,000 Californians for food assistance through CalFresh⁴
- 168,000 Californians with severe disabilities not served by regional centers⁵

Research consistently shows that using plain language in government communication reduces inquiries, increases compliance, and lowers administrative costs. In Washington State, revising a Department of Revenue letter into plain language led to a 95% drop in hotline calls and generated an additional \$5 million in revenue. Similarly, simplifying a U.S. Veterans Benefits contact letter increased the response rate from 35% to 55%, saving an estimated \$8 million annually. Ensuring that state communications are clear and genuinely useful to the public is an essential step toward building a more efficient, accessible, and equitable government.

Background.

California law (Government Code § 6219) requires all state government departments and agencies to use plain and straightforward language in their written documents. This means avoiding technical terms when possible and ensuring that documents are coherent and easy to read. The law applies to various types of documents, including contracts, forms, licenses, announcements, regulations, manuals, and memos needed for the agency's duties.

The Office of Data and Innovation (ODI) created California’s statewide plain language equity standard. ODI offers an online course for state employees titled “Introduction to Plain Language for the Public Sector.” This course provides a foundational overview of plain language and its role in effective government communication. Participants learn about:

- The principles of plain language
- The benefits of using plain language, including its impact on equity
- How to create products and services that align with California’s plain language standard

²Dietz, M., Lucia, L., Kadiyala, S., Challenor, T., Rak, A., Chen, Y., Haile, M., Roby, D., & Kominski, G. (2023, March 22). California’s uninsured in 2024: Medi-Cal expands to all low-income adults, but half a million undocumented Californians lack affordable coverage options. UC Berkeley Labor Center. <https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/californias-uninsured-in-2024/>

³ Anderson, R. (2021). Estimating the CalWORKS take-up rate. California Legislative Analyst’s Office. <https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/4340>

⁴ Anderson, R. (2022). The 2022-23 budget: California food assistance program. California Legislative Analyst’s Office. <https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/4532>

⁵ California State Council on Developmental Disabilities. (2024). *How does the Council define developmental disabilities?* <https://scdd.ca.gov/about/>

The course also includes hands-on opportunities for participants to practice writing in plain language.

This bill expands on current law by stating that state agencies must go beyond simply posting a plain language policy online. The bill mandates several specific documentations and administrative actions to ensure these policies are active and accountable.

Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act. The Act (California Government Code Section 7290 et. Seq.) was signed into law in 1973, to eliminate language barriers that preclude people of our State, who either because they do not speak or write English or because their primary language is other than English, from having equal access to public services. This Act mandates that State and local agencies directly involved in the furnishing of information or the rendering of services to the public must in specifically prescribed situations employ a sufficient number of qualified bilingual persons in public contact positions to ensure the provision of information and services to the public in the language of the non-English speaking people.

The Act further mandates that every State and local agency that serves a substantial number of non-English speaking people, and provides materials in English explaining services, shall also provide the same type of materials in any non-English language spoken by a substantial number of the public served by the agency.

In support. The California State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) writes, “Californians deserve clear, accessible communication from their government. Yet many residents struggle to understand state forms, instructions, and program information. This lack of clarity limits access to essential services, reduces public trust, and creates inequitable barriers – particularly for individuals with cognitive disabilities, limited literacy, or those who speak a language other than English. Plain language is not merely communications improvement—it is a matter of equity and access. When government information is clear, more Californians can participate fully in programs designed to support them. It also reduces administrative costs, increases compliance, and strengthens public trust.”

Related legislation. AB 1242 (Nguyen) of 2025. Would revise and expand requirements under the state’s Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act and require the California Health and Human Services Agency to designate a Language Access Director. (Senate Committee on Appropriations – Held on Suspense File)

Prior legislation. SB 1078 (Min) of 2024. Would have established the Office of Language Access within the California Health and Human Services Agency. (Assembly Appropriations Committee - Held on the Suspense File)

AB 2639 (Fong) of 2012. This bill would have made technical, non-substantive changes to what qualifies as a state agency document. (Held at Desk)

AB 67 (Dymally), Chapter 259, Statutes of 2007. Standardized and defined language in the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act, clarified the State Personnel Board's (SPB's) responsibility to establish bilingual fluency standard, and expands the SPB's ability to grant exemptions to the language survey and implementation plan.

SB 853 (Escutia), Chapter 713, Statutes of 2003. Required the Department of Managed Health Care to adopt, not later than January 1, 2006, regulations establishing standards and requirements to provide health care service plan enrollees with access to language assistance in obtaining health care services.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California State Council on Developmental Disabilities
Autism Speaks
SCDD

Opposition

None on file

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