
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 2360 (Arambula) - State agencies: governmental linguistics

Version: May 18, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: G.O. 14 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Janelle Miyashiro

Bill Summary: AB 2360 requires state agencies to write all new public-facing documents in clear, plain language, as specified, and to establish internal oversight processes to ensure communications are easy for the public to understand, including people with disabilities or limited English proficiency.

Fiscal Impact:

- The Office of Data Innovation (ODI) estimates one-time IT costs of \$250,000 to build a unified plain language tool to help agencies standardize their public-facing documents, and ongoing costs of approximately \$400,000 for 3.0 permanent positions to maintain the tool (General Fund). This estimate assumes ODI will act as the lead agency for plain language compliance.
- Unknown, potentially significant costs for state agencies to comply with plain language requirements and establish internal oversight processes (General Fund and various special funds). Actual costs will range from absorbable to the mid-hundreds of thousands of dollars per entity, depending on the number and types of public-facing documents they have, whether they already utilize plain language best practices, and, if not, their ability to absorb any new administrative workload within existing resources. (See Staff Comments for additional detail.)

Background: California law requires all state government departments and agencies to use plain, straightforward language in their public documents (such as contracts, forms, licenses, manuals, and regulations) to ensure they are coherent, accessible, and free of unnecessary technical jargon. To support this initiative, ODI established California's statewide plain language equity standard and offers an online foundational course, "Introduction to Plain Language for the Public Sector," to train state employees in effective government communication.

Complementing these clarity standards, the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act of 1973 mandates that state and local agencies directly serving the public must employ a sufficient number of qualified bilingual personnel in public-contact positions under specified conditions. Furthermore, any agency serving a substantial number of non-English speaking constituents must translate all English-language materials explaining public services into the languages spoken by those communities.

Proposed Law:

- Requires each state agency to write each document that it produces after January 1, 2027, either digitally or in print, in plain language, avoiding technical terms as much as possible, and using a coherent and easily readable style.

- Provides that, to implement this bill, a state agency may use standards created by ODI that identify how a state agency incorporates plain language principles and practices.
- Requires the head of each state agency, within existing personnel and resources, to do all of the following:
 - Designate one or more senior officials within the state agency to oversee state agency implementation of this bill.
 - Communicate the requirements of this bill to the employees of the state agency.
 - Establish a process for overseeing the ongoing compliance of the state agency with the requirements of this bill.
- Defines “plain language” to mean 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.
- Defines “state agency” to mean each department, commission, office, or other administrative agency of state government.
- Defines “state agency document” to mean any publicly available instruction, form, license, communication, regulation, manual, memorandum, or any other written communication that is necessary to carry out the state agency’s responsibilities under the law.

Staff Comments: The actual fiscal impact will vary significantly across state agencies based on each department’s unique public-facing document volume and baseline practices. For comparison:

- The Commission for Behavioral Health estimates costs of \$26,000 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026-27 and \$52,000 ongoing (Behavioral Health Services Fund).
- The California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) estimates total ongoing costs of \$322,000.
- The Department of Social Services (DSS) estimates costs of \$591,000 in FY 2026-27 and \$579,000 ongoing annually.
- The Department of Real Estate (DRE) estimates costs of \$160,000 in FY 2026-27, \$152,000 in FY 2027-28, and \$77,000 ongoing annually (Real Estate Fund).
- The Office of Emergency Services (OES) estimates one-time costs of \$350,000 (General Fund).
- The State Water Resources Control Board estimates ongoing costs of \$500,000 (various special funds).

- The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation does not anticipate a significant fiscal impact, but notes concerns about meeting the plain language mandate for documents containing complex legal jargon.
- The California Department of Human Resources, Department of Transportation, Department of Insurance, Department of General Services, Department of Justice, Energy Commission, Department of State Hospitals, and Secretary of State anticipate any costs to be absorbable.

Staff notes that the fiscal impact to departments outlined above may ultimately be lower. Because ODI intends to serve as the lead compliance agency, the successful deployment of its centralized tool may generate statewide efficiencies, potentially negating the need for individual departments to independently contract for plain language software or revision services.

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