

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025**

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SENATE BILL 606

Short Title: Language Access & State Holidays Act. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Batch, Chaudhuri, and Mohammed (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate

March 26, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO ENSURE NORTH CAROLINIANS CAN ACCESS ESSENTIAL STATE
SERVICES IN THEIR PRIMARY LANGUAGE AND TO FORMALLY RECOGNIZE
KEY CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS THAT REFLECT THE
COMMUNITIES THAT CALL NORTH CAROLINA HOME.

Whereas, North Carolina is one of the fastest-growing states in the country, with many
residents speaking languages other than English at home; and

Whereas, making state services, education, and healthcare more accessible benefits
public safety, economic growth, and community engagement; and

Whereas, recognizing widely observed cultural and religious holidays ensures that
North Carolina respects the traditions of the people who live and work here; Now, therefore,
The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**PART I. REQUIRE THE DIVISION OF MOTOR VEHICLES TO PROVIDE
MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR LICENSURE IN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGES AND
TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO ENSURE THAT
TRAFFIC SIGNS ARE CLEAR TO NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS.**

SECTION 1.1. G.S. 20-7 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(c2) Provision of Materials in Additional Languages. – The Division shall provide an
option for applicants to: (i) receive all materials prepared pursuant to G.S. 20-88.1 and (ii) take
the written test required for licensure under this section in all of the following languages, in
addition to English:

- (1) Arabic.
- (2) Hindi.
- (3) Korean.
- (4) Mandarin Chinese.
- (5) Spanish.
- (6) Telugu.
- (7) French.
- (8) Vietnamese.
- (9) German.
- (10) Cherokee.
- (11) Tagalog.
- (12) Russian.
- (13) Portuguese.
- (14) Tamil.



- (15) Hmong.
- (16) Khmer.
- (17) Burmese.
- (18) Karen.
- (19) Karenni.
- (20) Chin.
- (21) Bunong.
- (22) Rhede.
- (23) Kho.
- (24) Jari.
- (25) Minhar."

SECTION 1.2. G.S. 20-88.1 reads as rewritten:

"§ 20-88.1. Driver education.

...

(f) The Division shall, upon request: (i) make copies of the driver license handbook available and (ii) provide access to any training course developed pursuant to this section in all of the following languages, in addition to English:

- (1) Arabic.
- (2) Hindi.
- (3) Korean.
- (4) Mandarin Chinese.
- (5) Spanish.
- (6) Telugu.
- (7) French.
- (8) Vietnamese.
- (9) German.
- (10) Cherokee.
- (11) Tagalog.
- (12) Russian.
- (13) Portuguese.
- (14) Tamil.
- (15) Hmong.
- (16) Khmer.
- (17) Burmese.
- (18) Karen.
- (19) Karenni.
- (20) Chin.
- (21) Bunong.
- (22) Rhede.
- (23) Kho.
- (24) Jari.
- (25) Minhar."

SECTION 1.3. G.S. 136-30 reads as rewritten:

"§ 136-30. Uniform signs and other traffic control devices on highways, streets, and public vehicular areas.

...

(d1) Multilingual Service. – To the extent permitted by federal law and regulations, the appearance criteria of the Department of Transportation's supplement to the Uniform Manual shall require that all traffic signs, including signs directing persons to roads and places of importance erected pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, be clear to non-English speakers through either translations or universally recognized symbols.

...."

SECTION 1.4. Notwithstanding G.S. 143C-5-2, there is appropriated from the Highway Fund:

- (1) To the Division of Motor Vehicles, the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2025-2026 fiscal year to be used to produce the materials required by Sections 4.1 and 4.2 of this section.
- (2) To the Department of Transportation, the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2025-2026 fiscal year to be used to implement the requirements of Section 4.3 of this section.

SECTION 1.5. Section 1.4 of this Part becomes effective July 1, 2025. The remainder of this Part becomes effective January 1, 2026.

PART II. REQUIRE SCHOOL DOCUMENTS TO BE TRANSLATED INTO SEVERAL LANGUAGES AND TO ENCOURAGE EXCUSED ABSENCES FOR CERTAIN RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

SECTION 2.1.(a) Part 3 of Article 7B of Chapter 115C is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 115C-76.41. Parent rights to receive information.

(a) The Department of Public Instruction and the governing body of all public school units shall make available a copy of any document for parents translated into Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, Telugu, Korean, Spanish, Arabic, French, Vietnamese, German, Cherokee, Tagalog, Russian, Portuguese, Tamil, Hmong, Khmer, Burmese, Karen, Karenni, Chin, Bunong, Rhede, Kho, Jari, and Minhar.

(b) As used in this section, a "document for parents" is any form, communication, notice, or report that the school will provide to parents or that a parent has the ability to access, regardless of whether the document is printed or electronic, including the following:

- (1) Enrollment forms.
- (2) Consent forms.
- (3) Educational or informational documents required to be provided to parents under G.S. 115C-12, 115C-47, 115C-150.12C, 115C-218.75, 115C-238.66, or 116-239.8.
- (4) School policies accessible to parents, including policies shared on the school's website or learning management system.
- (5) Disciplinary notices or forms.
- (6) Notices, forms, and records related to a student's disability or disability testing.
- (7) Notices, forms, and reports required under this Article.

(c) The Department and the governing body of public school units are encouraged to offer interpretation services for parent-teacher conferences and other critical meetings to ensure parents can fully engage in their child's education."

SECTION 2.1.(b) This section is effective when it becomes law and applies beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.

SECTION 2.2.(a) G.S. 115C-302.1(d)(2) reads as rewritten:

- "(2) Use. – Personal leave may be used only upon the authorization of the teacher's immediate supervisor, as follows:
- a. Unless the request is approved by the principal, a teacher shall not take personal leave on the first day the teacher is required to report for the school year, on a required teacher workday, on days scheduled for State testing, or on the day before or the day after a holiday or scheduled vacation day.

b. On days other than those referenced in sub-subdivision a. of this subdivision, if the request is made at least five days in advance, the request shall be automatically granted subject to the availability of a substitute teacher, and the teacher cannot be required to provide a reason for the request.

c. Supervisors and principals are encouraged to make all reasonable efforts to accommodate a request for personal leave if the teacher is requesting the leave for observance of a religious holiday."

SECTION 2.2.(b) G.S. 115C-316 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(e) Local boards of education are encouraged to adopt a policy that schools will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate a school employee's request to use leave for the observance of a religious holiday."

SECTION 2.2.(c) G.S. 115C-379(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) In addition to any excused absences authorized pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, the rules shall require school principals to authorize the following excused absences:

(1) Religious observance. – A minimum of two excused absences each academic year for religious observances required by the faith of a student or the student's parent or legal guardian. The principal is encouraged to allow excused absences for religious holidays beyond those required to be given, as policies allow.

...."

SECTION 2.3.(a) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Public Instruction the sum of one million dollars (\$1,000,000) in recurring funds for the 2025-2026 school year to be allocated to public school units on an as-needed basis to cover the cost of providing substitute teachers if a teacher is on personal leave to observe a religious holiday pursuant to G.S. 115C-302.1(d)(2).

SECTION 2.3.(b) This section becomes effective July 1, 2025.

PART III. EXPANSION OF MULTILINGUAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES

SECTION 3.1. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Health and Human Services (Department) the sum of one hundred thousand (\$100,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2025-2026 fiscal year to develop and make available, free of charge, on the Department's web site the following forms and documents translated into English, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, Telugu, Korean, Arabic, French, Vietnamese, German, Cherokee, Tagalog, Russian, Portuguese, Tamil, Hmong, Khmer, Burmese, Karen, Karenni, Chin, Bunong, Rhede, Kho, Jari, and Minhar:

(1) Informed consent forms and explanatory materials regarding informed consent, developed in consultation with the appropriate occupational licensing boards, that can be used by healthcare providers licensed in this State when treating patients with limited English proficiency.

(2) Information regarding all of the following:

a. The Adult Care Home Residents' Bill of Rights set forth in G.S. 131D-21.

b. The Nursing Home Patients' Bill of Rights set forth in G.S. 131E-117.

c. The Home Care Clients' Bill of Rights set forth in G.S. 131E-144.3.

(3) Any public health information determined by the State Health Director to be essential to maintaining public health and safety, including at least all of the following:

a. Information about health hazards, including communicable and non-communicable diseases.

b. Information about public health emergencies.

- c. Information about the immunization requirements of Part 2 of Article 6 of Chapter 130A of the General Statutes.
- d. Information about the Newborn Screening Program authorized by G.S. 130A-125.

SECTION 3.2. Every healthcare provider that is a recipient of State funds, as defined in G.S. 143C-1-1, is encouraged to employ multilingual staff or provide interpreter services for patients with limited English proficiency. As used in this section, the term "healthcare provider" means any of the following:

- (1) An individual who is licensed, certified, or otherwise authorized under Chapter 90 of the General Statutes to provide health care services in the ordinary course of business or practice of a profession or in an approved education or training program.
- (2) A health care facility licensed under Chapters 131E or 122C of the General Statutes, where health care services are provided to patients.

SECTION 3.3. This Part becomes effective July 1, 2025.

PART IV. EXPAND CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

SECTION 4.1. G.S. 103-4 reads as rewritten:

"§ 103-4. Dates of public holidays.

(a) The following are declared to be legal public holidays:

- (1) New Year's Day, January 1.
- (1a) Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, Birthday, the third Monday in January.
- (1b) Lunar New Year.
- ~~(2) Robert E. Lee's Birthday, January 19.~~
- (3) Washington's Birthday, the third Monday in February.
- (3a) Greek Independence Day, March 25.
- (4) Anniversary of signing of Halifax Resolves, April 12.
- ~~(5) Confederate Memorial Day, May 10.~~
- (6) Anniversary of Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, May 20.
- (7) Memorial Day, the last Monday in May.
- (8) Good Friday.
- (8a) Eid al-Adha.
- (9) Independence Day, July 4.
- (10) Labor Day, the first Monday in September.
- (10a) First Responders Day, September 11.
- (11) Columbus Day, the second Monday in October.
- (11a) Yom Kippur.
- (12) Veterans Day, November 11.
- (13) Tuesday after the first Monday in November in years in which a general election is to be held.
- (14) Thanksgiving Day, the fourth Thursday in November.
- (15) Christmas Day, December 25.
- (16) Diwali.
- (17) Eid al-Fitr.
- (18) Rosh Hashanah.

(b) Whenever any public holiday shall fall upon Sunday, the Monday following shall be a public holiday."

SECTION 4.2 State agencies are encouraged to accommodate employees who observe the cultural and religious set out in G.S. 103-4, as amended by Section 4.1 of this Part, by allowing excused absences.

1 **SECTION 4.3.(a)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department
2 of Administration the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) in nonrecurring funds for the
3 2025-2026 fiscal year to be used to coordinate public awareness efforts to ensure State agencies
4 and residents of North Carolina are informed of the new cultural and religious holidays enacted
5 in Section 4.1 of this Part.

6 **SECTION 4.3.(b)** This section becomes effective July 1, 2025.
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8 **PART V. EFFECTIVE DATE**

9 **SECTION 5.1.** Unless otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes law.