

Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/press-releases/house-passage-english-only-bill-disappoints-aclu>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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COLUMBUS- The American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio expressed disappointment with the Ohio House today after it passed House Bill 477 by a vote of 54-42. The bill restricts state and local government from communicating in languages other than English, except in special circumstances.

ACLU of Ohio Staff Attorney Carrie Davis said, "English-only policies are misguided and divisive. People want to learn and improve their English, but the demand for learning classes outpaces their availability."

"This legislation is ill-conceived, will lead to costly litigation, and will hurt Ohio's ability to attract innovative companies and good jobs," added Davis.

In addition, the bill could have ramifications for safety and security.

Federal and state laws allow other languages to be used in some circumstances, but there may be a host of other situations where it is needed. Under English-only, people who speak other languages may have reduced access to information on emergency services or other government communications, no translator when police interview witnesses and if police need to speak to a person while on patrol.

The bill is also vague in providing parameters for English-only and allows individual government employees the power to decide how to implement it. This may cause confusion among employees as to what the law actually allows.

Davis concluded, "This vague law invites unequal application across the state and increases bureaucracy. It is bad for business, safety, security and further divides our communities. It is unfortunate that some members of the House chose to support such harmful and ill-conceived legislation."

The nonprofit, nonpartisan ACLU of Ohio is based in Cleveland with community and campus groups throughout the state. There are 30,000 ACLU members and supporters in Ohio and more than 500,000 nationwide.

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