

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 18, 2024

The Honorable Adrienne Todman
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Deputy Secretary Todman,

Thank you for your service to the United States. I write to urge the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to improve language access to Federal housing services. While HUD has made improvements since 2021 to publish housing resources in additional languages, more must be done as soon as possible.

As you know, the United States is in the midst of a housing crisis. Ensuring all Americans have easy access to Federal housing services is vital: approximately 14.9% of Georgians speak a language other than English at home.¹ While HUD has made many resources available in Spanish, limited resources exist for the more than 200,000 Georgians whose primary language is not English or Spanish. For these Georgians, accessing HUD services can be difficult.

HUD's 2021-2026 Language Access Plan outlines important improvements to boost language access to housing services, but three years after the plan's announcement, limited information has been published about the status of implementation of this plan, and HUD continues to rely on third-party translators for online services in languages other than English or Spanish. Moreover, translations over the phone into languages other than Spanish can be difficult to access.

In the midst of a housing crisis, it is vital to ensure Americans can easily access assistance from the Federal government for their housing needs. With this in mind, please answer the following questions and requests:

1. Please provide a detailed update on the implementation of HUD's 2021-2026 Language Access Plan, including specific improvements made across HUD offices to improve language accessibility.
2. How does HUD accommodate individuals requesting services over the phone in languages other than English? If HUD provides these services through an external third party, how does HUD ensure the safety of sensitive personal data?

¹ <https://data.census.gov/profile/Georgia?g=040XX00US13#populations-and-people>

3. Federal recommendations from Digital.gov state that agencies should not rely solely on automatic machine translation services or computer-aided technology for translation services, and that all translations should be checked by a competent human translator. Are automated translations for online services, such as those provided on HUD.gov, checked by human translators?

I look forward to working with HUD to ensure Georgians can easily access HUD services to meet their housing needs.

I respectfully request a response to this letter within one month of receipt.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Ossoff", written in a cursive style.

Jon Ossoff
United States Senator