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**POLICIES NEEDED TO IMPROVE LANGUAGE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE**  
**Bill Would Provide Funding for Medical Interpretation Services in New York**

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 13, 2008  
**TIME:** 11:30 am  
**PLACE:** LCA Press Room  
Legislative Office Building  
Albany, New York

More than 20 percent of New York's population is foreign-born and 2 million New Yorkers speak little or no English. Language and cultural barriers prevent many New Yorkers from receiving needed healthcare. These barriers can also dangerously impede doctor-patient communication, and can lead to misdiagnosis and hinder patients from following health care recommendations.

Members of the legislature, immigrant women and representatives of health organizations will unveil a policy brief containing recommendations for improving language access across the country. They will also support legislation to fund needed medical interpretation services in New York.

Speakers include:

**Assemblymember Adriano Espaillat** (D-New York City)  
**Senator John Sabini** (D-Jackson Heights)  
**JoAnn M. Smith**, President and CEO, Family Planning Advocates of New York State  
**Judith Saidel**, PhD, Executive Director, Center for Women in Government & Civil Society,  
University at Albany  
**Ladan Alomar**, Executive Director, Centro Civico of Amsterdam  
**Jenny Rejeske**, Health Policy Associate, New York Immigration Coalition

Research shows that linguistic barriers create complex challenges for both providers and patients in healthcare encounters. These barriers lead to denials and delays in services, provision of services of inferior quality, confusion about treatment plans, ineffective decision making, inability to comply with patient care guidelines, and costly medical errors.

Last year, experts from across the country gathered at a conference at the University at Albany to develop policies that would reduce language barriers in healthcare settings. "The New York State Conference on Increasing Language Access to Healthcare: Toward Effective State and National Policies" was convened by the Education Fund of Family Planning Advocates of New York State, the Center for Women in Government & Civil Society at the University at Albany, and the Center for Immigrant Health at New York University School of Medicine. More than 150 healthcare experts from across the country contributed to the policy brief and recommendations contained in "Increasing Language Access to Healthcare." The 2008 policy brief and information about the 2007 conference is available at [www.edfundfpa.org](http://www.edfundfpa.org).