

HB 141 Driver License Test Amendments

Sponsor: Rep. Gay Lynn Bennion (D- Cottonwood Heights)

Position: We support HB 141

Overview:

HB 141 would:

- Allows a person to take class D driver license (regular adult driver license) exam in the individual's preferred language, subject to availability, for the initial application and first renewal application;
- If the Utah Driver's License Division is unable to administer the exam in a requested language, and individual may use a translator approved by the division and paid for by themselves;
- Any individual who has taken the initial and first renewal driver's license exam in a language other than English must take the second renewal exam in English;
- Require a report from the Driver License Division on the number of exams taken in languages other than English to the Transportation Interim Committee

Background:

In many parts of Utah, obtaining a valid driver's license is practically essential for holding a job, going to school, or accessing healthcare.

Plus, passing the Utah's driver license test is not easy. With 30 questions, Utah's written driver's license test is three times as long as the typical U.S. Citizenship test.

Last year, the Utah Legislature passed [SB 216](#) (Sen. Luz Escamilla, D-Salt Lake) that requires the state's Driver License Division to provide tests in the top five languages spoken in the state other than English. As a result, the test is now available in Spanish, Tongan, Vietnamese, Mandarin Chinese, and Portuguese. Over 800 Utahns have taken the exam in one of these languages, with Spanish and Mandarin Chinese being the most requested.

Talking Points:

- HB 141 builds on language access advanced by [SB 216](#) last year. It allows an individual to complete the driver license initial test and first renewal application in their preferred language (subject to availability) or allows an approved translator to be present.
- About 15% of Utah residents older than age 5 speak a language other than English at home. Approximately one-third of this population speaks English "less than very well."
- Almost 300,000 Utahns speak Spanish (10.26% of the state population) 16,000 speak Chinese Mandarin (0.56%), and 13,000 speak Samoan or other Austronesian languages (0.45%)
- Utah is becoming an increasingly diverse state: The University of Utah's Kem Gardner Institute estimates Utah's minority population will increase from approximately 20% in 2015 to 35% in 2065.
- HB 141 has already passed the House and a Senate committee. It needs one more vote on the Senate floor and it will become law after the governor signs it.
- We know from the results of [SB 216](#) that Utahns will take advantage of language resources when they are applying for a driver's license.
- This bill will provide many benefits to society, from more licensed and insured drivers on the road, to better access to driver licenses in underserved and immigrant communities.
- Expanding access to driver's license will enable more Utahns to seek employment, attend school, and get to their health care appointments.