

# HOUSE BILL 610

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CF 8lr2047

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By: **Delegates Pena-Melnyk, Ali, Gutierrez, Lee, Manno, Nathan-Pulliam, Ramirez, Reznik, and Valderrama**

Introduced and read first time: January 31, 2008

Assigned to: Ways and Means

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Task Force on the Preservation of Heritage Language Skills in Maryland**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing a Task Force on the Preservation of Language Skills  
4 in Maryland; providing for the membership and duties of the Task Force;  
5 requiring the election of a chair of the Task Force; requiring the State  
6 Department of Education to provide staff for the Task Force; prohibiting  
7 members of the Task Force from receiving certain compensation; authorizing a  
8 member to receive certain reimbursement; requiring the Task Force to report its  
9 findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on or  
10 before a certain date; providing for the termination of this Act; requiring the  
11 Task Force to continue to advise the Governor and the General Assembly on  
12 certain matters until a certain time; and generally relating to the Task Force on  
13 the Preservation of Heritage Language Skills in Maryland.

14 Preamble

15 WHEREAS, While it is important for new Americans to learn and master  
16 English, there is also a critical shortage of Americans proficient in languages other  
17 than English; and

18 WHEREAS, The need for world language skills is increasingly important in  
19 national security, defense, education, and in maintaining a competitive edge in  
20 business and trade; and

21 WHEREAS, The language fluency level required for success in national security  
22 and in a global economy often far exceeds that previously considered sufficient; and

23 WHEREAS, Native English speakers in traditional American academic  
24 programs generally do not study foreign languages for extensive periods; and

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 WHEREAS, Of those native English speakers who study the most difficult,  
2 high-interest languages, few reach the federal standard for “limited proficiency level,”  
3 with only 9% attaining limited proficiency in listening, 11% in speaking, and 35% in  
4 reading, and many fewer ever become proficient at the federal “professional” standard;  
5 and

6 WHEREAS, Maryland’s heritage language speakers, descendants of immigrants  
7 to Maryland, who are raised in homes in which foreign languages are spoken but are  
8 educated in English, comprise a valuable and vastly underutilized linguistic resource  
9 for the United States; and

10 WHEREAS, According to figures from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current  
11 Population Survey of 2005, more than 735,000 individuals in Maryland who are at  
12 least 6 years old, or nearly 14.5% of the State’s population, speak foreign languages at  
13 home; and

14 WHEREAS, Students in Maryland public school systems speak at least 150  
15 different languages; and

16 WHEREAS, Among the State’s heritage language speakers, many are fluent in  
17 languages of high interest for national security, defense, business, and trade  
18 industries, including more than 12,000 speakers of Persian, nearly 9,000 speakers of  
19 Urdu, more than 8,000 speakers of Arabic, nearly 49,000 speakers of Chinese, nearly  
20 34,000 speakers of Korean, nearly 15,000 speakers of Hindi, and more than 19,000  
21 speakers of Russian; and

22 WHEREAS, Such valuable heritage language skills tend to diminish rapidly as  
23 individuals and families are assimilated; and

24 WHEREAS, The speakers of heritage languages ought to be encouraged and  
25 assisted in maintaining, developing, and improving their native language abilities  
26 while improving their English skills; and

27 WHEREAS, Because the United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed  
28 2008 the International Year of Languages, promoting diversity and international  
29 understanding worldwide, it is a particularly good time to make full use of the many  
30 and varied language resources in our State; now, therefore,

31 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF  
32 MARYLAND, That:

33 (a) There is a Task Force on the Preservation of Heritage Language Skills in  
34 Maryland.

35 (b) The Task Force consists of the following members:

36 (1) one member of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President  
37 of the Senate;

1                   (2)    one member of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of  
2 the House;

3                   (3)    the Secretary of Business and Economic Development, or the  
4 Secretary's designee;

5                   (4)    the Secretary of Education, or the Secretary's designee;

6                   (5)    the Secretary of Human Resources, or the Secretary's designee;

7                   (6)    the Secretary of the Maryland Higher Education Commission, or  
8 the Secretary's designee;

9                   (7)    the following eight members, appointed by the Secretary of  
10 Education:

11                           (i)    four members from the business community, including  
12 representatives of the Fort Meade Alliance and the Maryland Chamber of Commerce,  
13 or similar organizations; and

14                           (ii)   four members who are familiar with heritage language  
15 programs and who are members of ethnic community groups; and

16                   (8)    the following three members as representatives of the University  
17 System of Maryland:

18                           (i)    one representative of the National Foreign Language  
19 Center; and

20                           (ii)   two other members to be designated by the Chancellor of the  
21 University System of Maryland.

22                   (c)    The Task Force shall elect a chair from among its members.

23                   (d)    The State Department of Education shall provide staff for the Task Force.

24                   (e)    A member of the Task Force:

25                           (1)    may not receive compensation as a member of the Task Force; but

26                           (2)    is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard  
27 State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

28                   (f)    The Task Force shall:

29                           (1)    study methods of advancing and preserving heritage language  
30 skills in Maryland;

1           (2)   consult with educators and other experts in the field of world  
2 language training and development;

3           (3)   review and identify the best practices of heritage language  
4 programs that are being or will be conducted by government, schools, community  
5 groups, religious groups, and ethnic groups in the State, across the U.S., and  
6 internationally;

7           (4)   compile data on the number of actual and potential heritage  
8 language speakers in Maryland;

9           (5)   develop a process to identify priority heritage languages that is  
10 flexible enough to meet current and future national security and international  
11 business requirements;

12          (6)   consider new, cost-effective, and innovative ways to encourage and  
13 facilitate heritage language learning while also encouraging new citizens of the U.S. to  
14 learn and master English; and

15          (7)   recommend actions and programs that ensure maximum  
16 preservation of heritage language skills and identify measures of success for each.

17          (g)   On or before January 1, 2009, the Task Force shall report its findings and  
18 recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State  
19 Government Article, the General Assembly.

20          (h)   The Task Force shall continue to advise the Governor and the General  
21 Assembly on the implementation of its recommendations until this Act is abrogated  
22 and of no further force and effect.

23           SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
24 July 1, 2008. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and 1 month and, at the  
25 end of July 31, 2009, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this  
26 Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.