



March 18, 2024

Position: SUPPORT

SB 395 - Higher Education - Credit Eligibility and Transfer of Credits - English as a Second Language Courses (Credit for All Language Learning (CALL) Act)

House Appropriations Committee:

To the Members of the Committee,

Today, I write you all to advocate for the passage of a bill that promises to enhance the educational opportunities for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners within our state, particularly those from Latino and immigrant communities. Sponsored by Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU), a respected statewide network dedicated to supporting Latino and immigrant communities through policy advocacy and capacity building, this bill, known as the Credit for All Language Learning (CALL) Act, seeks to bridge educational gaps and foster equity in higher education.

Under current law, the transferability of credits between Maryland's public institutions of higher education is governed by procedures established by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). These procedures include standards for articulation agreements and processes for addressing the denial of credit transfers. Furthermore, a statewide transfer agreement mandates the transferability of at least 60 credits between community colleges and public four-year institutions. Despite these provisions, gaps remain, particularly for ESL learners whose courses are not uniformly recognized or transferable across institutions.

The CALL Act directly addresses these gaps by mandating that ESL courses taken at public community colleges, provided they are not classified as remedial, must be transferable to any public institution of higher education in the state. This transferability is extended to include potential acceptance at private nonprofit institutions, which are required to review such credits for transfer consideration. Additionally, the bill stipulates that ESL courses should be eligible for credit towards world language or humanities requirements for a student's associate degree, further recognizing the value of language learning in our increasingly global society.

This legislation stands to benefit our state in several ways. Firstly, it acknowledges and values the educational endeavors of ESL learners, many of whom are part of our vibrant Latino and

immigrant communities. By facilitating the transfer of ESL credits, we not only honor their efforts but also enhance their pathways to higher education and, subsequently, better economic opportunities. Secondly, the bill supports the capacity-building mission of organizations like MLU, empowering them to further assist grassroots Hispanic-serving organizations and, by extension, the communities they serve.

The fiscal summary of the bill assures us that the implementation of these provisions is feasible using existing resources, with no material impact on the revenues of higher education institutions or local community colleges. This practical approach underscores the bill's sustainability and its potential for positive, wide-reaching impacts without undue financial burden.

In conclusion, the Credit for All Language Learning (CALL) Act represents a crucial step towards educational equity and justice for ESL learners in Maryland. By supporting this bill, we not only advance the prospects of individual students but also strengthen the fabric of our state by investing in the diverse talents and potentials of all its residents. I urge you to consider the far-reaching benefits of this legislation and lend it your full support.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Respectfully,
Carlos Orbe, Jr.
Communications and Public Affairs Specialist
Maryland Latinos Unidos