

Credit for All Language Learning (CALL) Act HB569
Owen Silverman Andrews Testimony, 2/13/24, Maryland House of Delegates,
Appropriations Committee

This bill originated from the most directly affected and marginalized people in the context it pertains to. It is the result of a grassroots, consensus-based decision making process that involved some key actors in all relevant sectors. It is clear, concise, precise, and well-bounded. It costs the state nothing, but would mean so very much to the students within its scope.

Next week, the world will celebrate International Mother Language Day, a UNESCO designated date recognizing peoples' right to their own language. Indeed, language justice and multilingualism are policy arenas in which Maryland can and must advance. On February 21st we will be reminded, whether you speak with an accent (and we all have one), are a person who stutters, are Deaf, or speak one or more languages other than or including English at home and in your community, your voice matters.

By passing the CALL Act, the General Assembly (GA) sends a clear message that college, and the high paying, tax revenue generating jobs and innovations college leads to, are for our immigrant multilingual English learners, too. By passing the CALL Act, the GA sends a clear message—we hear you, we see you, we value you, and we will do all in our power so you can be successful here. But most of all, the Credit for All Language Learning Act is about equal credit for equal work. It is a promise to students that the value of your hard work learning a new language is to your credit and will be credited to you.

Multilingual people are valuable to Maryland's schools, community colleges, colleges, and universities. The strength of their multilingualism is apparent to all who know them. By passing the CALL Act, the GA ensures that accrued value will transfer with them as they advanced from dual enrolled high school students—central to the success of the Blueprint—to our community colleges—central to the upskilling of labor our state's economy so dearly needs—to our private and public universities—Maryland's engines of research and pathway to the professional class.

The CALL Act sets right a longstanding wrong. It won't cost a dime, and will likely save taxpayers on federal and state college aid while accelerating multilingual students into the workforce.

Please, make the right call for our students and pass this bill.