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Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

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Support SB0395, Relating to the Credit for All Language Learning (CALL) Act.

My name is Lama Masri, and I am an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) educator who has taught ESOL learners in Maryland since 2018. I am currently the ESOL Program Manager at Frederick Community College, and I oversee the credit and non-credit English language learning programs at the college. Though I am employed by Frederick Community College, my testimony as provided represents my personal and professional opinion only and does not represent or express the views, opinions, or claims of the College.

I am in support of SB0395, the CALL Act, which can provide ESOL students with equitable access to higher education by accepting the transfer of ESOL credit courses from 2-year colleges to 4-year universities. Multilingual students who are required to take credit ESOL courses are not only engaged in learning the fundamentals of the English language, but they are also tasked with exploring the central themes in humanities such as human communication and expression. ESOL students examine how language shapes and reflects culture, society, and individual identity, and develop critical thinking, cultural awareness, and appreciation of diverse perspectives, making ESOL courses align with the broader goals of humanities education. ESOL students finish these classes equipped with the language skills needed to evaluate reading material, analyze information, search for data to support their arguments, and create presentations and essays that include correct use of standard language conventions. In short, ESOL students are expected to show mastery of language use not required from students in World Language classes.

Finally, supporting SB0395, the CALL Act, is essential for providing equitable access to higher education for ESOL students. Accepting the transfer of ESOL credit courses recognizes the academic rigor and interdisciplinary nature of these courses. By acknowledging the unique challenges and achievements of ESOL students, we can ensure that they are empowered to succeed academically and contribute meaningfully to our diverse society.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.