

My name is Raymond Gonzales. I am a resident of District 17. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB395, Credit for All Language Learning (CALL) Act. First, I would like to thank Sen. Malcolm Augustine and Sen. Jim Rosapepe, as well as Del. Jared Solomon in the House, for sponsoring this Bill. In my twenty-five years at one of Maryland's community colleges, it has been my privilege to teach and serve students in the school's academic English as a Second Language (ESL) program. They and the thousands of community college students statewide who take academic ESL courses would benefit immensely if the CALL Act is passed.

These incredibly diverse Multilingual English Learners (MELs) possess the very qualities that Maryland's economy needs to be successful: resilience, motivation, a strong work ethic, multilingualism (often more than two languages), and many more. At the same time, most community college MELs are not among the economically privileged in Maryland. Many are recent immigrants who do not benefit from the family wealth that other Maryland residents have built up over generations. In our conversations with our students, community college academic ESL faculty know that a significant percentage of them work full- or almost full-time, sometimes in multiple jobs, while taking several ESL classes.

Yet, because none of their ESL classes receive credit towards graduation or transfer to institutions of higher education, their path to obtaining associate and bachelor's degrees and pursuing their careers is made more difficult. Relevant data from the [Community College Research Center](#) at Teachers College, Columbia University, and other sources, indicate the longer it takes for community college students to start taking credit-bearing classes, the less likely they are to earn their associate degree or transfer to four-year schools. It is also important that community college academic ESL classes transfer to institutions of higher education as language and/or humanities credits to ensure that students graduate and join the workforce sooner. Passing the CALL Act will result in more community college MELs successfully filling Maryland's critical need for teachers, nurses, and professionals in the biological, health, data, and computer sciences.

Passage of the CALL Act will also address an important equity issue. Community college students receive degree credit for their introductory-level and above World Language courses. However, community college MELs do not receive credit for their academic ESL classes despite the equal and often significantly higher level of language they must demonstrate, especially in their upper-level ESL courses. In granting degree and transferable credit to community college ESL courses, the CALL Act not only addresses this inequality but also acknowledges and values the rigorous linguistic and academic work put in by community college MELs in the completion of their ESL courses.

In short, the CALL Act is highly beneficial to both Maryland's MEL students and their families as well as the state's efforts to achieve its current and future economic goals. I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB395.

Sincerely,



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