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Legislative District 47
Prince George's County

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

Executive Nominations Committee

Education, Energy and the
Environment Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 14, 2024

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

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to present **Senate Bill 395 - Higher Education – Credit Eligibility and Transfer of Credits – English as a Second Language Courses (Credit for All Language Learning (CALL) Act)**, which mandates specific requirements focusing on English as a Second Language (ESL) or English language learner courses taken at public community colleges. It stipulates that if these courses are not designated as remedial by the community college, they must be transferable to any institution of higher education within the State. Furthermore, the bill asserts that an institution of higher education in the State is prohibited from refusing the transfer of such credits for any reason. The bill directs public community colleges to deem ESL or English language learner courses as eligible for either world language or humanities electives credit, or both, towards a student's associate degree, provided that the course is not categorized as a remedial course. This comprehensive approach ensures the seamless transferability and appropriate academic credit recognition for ESL or English language learner courses across institutions.

As a Senator representing a district with a vibrant immigrant community, I am committed to championing legislation that opens educational doors for my constituents and recognizes their hard work. Approaching this issue, I also consider it from a business perspective, evaluating the positive impact on students, schools, workers, companies, and the economy. Maryland needs more multilingual college graduates, particularly in fields such as nursing, teaching, small business ownership, and various roles in large corporations and public sector employers. Job market analyses from community colleges indicate a growing demand for language skills, with employers willing to pay a premium for them. Despite this, higher education systems seem to devalue the market value of language skills for certain students.

The CALL Act not only expedites the timeline for immigrant students to earn college certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees by reducing the number of semesters required, but it also encourages high school students and their adult family members to consider college as a viable option. Removing the barrier of advanced language courses without credit sends a clear message to potential scholars that college is accessible to them as well.

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The benefits extend beyond individual students to include fiscal advantages for community colleges, colleges, and universities. The Act is expected to lead to increased enrollment, retention, completion, and transfer rates in English Language Learning classes, contributing to the institutions' reaccreditation and funding. Furthermore, awarding credit for these classes enhances the appeal of Maryland community colleges to international students on F-1 visas, positively impacting tuition revenues.

In alignment with my priority to ensure diversity and equity in higher education, especially in exclusive institutions, the CALL Act creates broader pathways for culturally, ethnically, linguistically, and racially diverse students transferring from community colleges. This approach addresses issues related to college transfer and completion rates in a precise and well-bounded manner.

By passing the CALL Act, we respond to the call for equality, advocating for equal credit for equal work. It not only supports the educational and economic success of immigrant students but also contributes to the overall diversity and equity goals in our state's higher education system. Let us move forward by enacting the Credit for All Language Learning Act.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I urge the committee to give a **favorable** report for **Senate Bill 395 - Higher Education – Credit Eligibility and Transfer of Credits – English as a Second Language Courses (Credit for All Language Learning (CALL) Act)**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Malcolm Augustine".

Senator Malcolm Augustine