

# HOUSE BILL 610

P1

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CF SB 506

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By: **Delegates Pena-Melnyk, Ali, Gutierrez, Lee, Manno, Nathan-Pulliam, Ramirez, Reznik, and Valderrama**

Introduced and read first time: January 31, 2008

Assigned to: Ways and Means

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Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

House action: Adopted

Read second time: March 19, 2008

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## CHAPTER \_\_\_\_\_

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Task Force on the Preservation of Heritage Language Skills in Maryland**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing a Task Force on the Preservation of Heritage  
4 Language Skills in Maryland; providing for the membership and duties of the  
5 Task Force; ~~requiring the election~~ providing for the selection of a chair of the  
6 Task Force; requiring the State Department of Education to provide staff for the  
7 Task Force; prohibiting members of the Task Force from receiving certain  
8 compensation; authorizing a member to receive certain reimbursement;  
9 requiring the Task Force to report its findings and recommendations to the  
10 Governor and the General Assembly on or before a certain date; providing for  
11 the termination of this Act; requiring the Task Force to continue to advise the  
12 Governor and the General Assembly on certain matters until a certain time;  
13 and generally relating to the Task Force on the Preservation of Heritage  
14 Language Skills in Maryland.

15 Preamble

16 WHEREAS, While it is important for new Americans to learn and master  
17 English, there is also a critical shortage of Americans proficient in languages other  
18 than English; and

19 WHEREAS, The need for world language skills is increasingly important in  
20 national security, defense, education, and in maintaining a competitive edge in  
21 business and trade; and

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**EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.**

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike-out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 WHEREAS, The language fluency level required for success in national security  
2 and in a global economy often far exceeds that previously considered sufficient; and

3 WHEREAS, Native English speakers in traditional American academic  
4 programs generally do not study foreign languages for extensive periods; and

5 WHEREAS, Of those native English speakers who study the most difficult,  
6 high-interest languages, few reach the federal standard for "limited proficiency level,"  
7 with only 9% attaining limited proficiency in listening, 11% in speaking, and 35% in  
8 reading, and many fewer ever become proficient at the federal "professional" standard;  
9 and

10 WHEREAS, Maryland's heritage language speakers, descendants of immigrants  
11 to Maryland, who are raised in homes in which foreign languages are spoken but are  
12 educated in English, comprise a valuable and vastly underutilized linguistic resource  
13 for the United States; and

14 WHEREAS, According to figures from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current  
15 Population Survey of 2005, more than 735,000 individuals in Maryland who are at  
16 least 6 years old, or nearly 14.5% of the State's population, speak foreign languages at  
17 home; and

18 WHEREAS, Students in Maryland public school systems speak at least 150  
19 different languages; and

20 WHEREAS, Among the State's heritage language speakers, many are fluent in  
21 languages of high interest for national security, defense, business, and trade  
22 industries, including more than 12,000 speakers of Persian, nearly 9,000 speakers of  
23 Urdu, more than 8,000 speakers of Arabic, nearly 49,000 speakers of Chinese, nearly  
24 34,000 speakers of Korean, nearly 15,000 speakers of Hindi, and more than 19,000  
25 speakers of Russian; and

26 WHEREAS, Such valuable heritage language skills tend to diminish rapidly as  
27 individuals and families are assimilated; and

28 WHEREAS, The speakers of heritage languages ought to be encouraged and  
29 assisted in maintaining, developing, and improving their native language abilities  
30 while improving their English skills; and

31 WHEREAS, Because the United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed  
32 2008 the International Year of Languages, promoting diversity and international  
33 understanding worldwide, it is a particularly good time to make full use of the many  
34 and varied language resources in our State; now, therefore,

35 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF  
36 MARYLAND, That:

1 (a) There is a Task Force on the Preservation of Heritage Language Skills in  
2 Maryland.

3 (b) The Task Force consists of the following members:

4 (1) one member of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President  
5 of the Senate;

6 (2) one member of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of  
7 the House;

8 (3) the Secretary of Business and Economic Development, or the  
9 Secretary's designee;

10 (4) the Secretary of Education, or the Secretary's designee;

11 (5) the Secretary of Human Resources, or the Secretary's designee;

12 (6) the Secretary of the Maryland Higher Education Commission, or  
13 the Secretary's designee;

14 (7) the Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Community  
15 Initiatives, or the Executive Director's designee;

16 ~~(7)~~ (8) the following eight members, appointed by the Secretary of  
17 Education:

18 (i) four members from the business community, including  
19 representatives of the Fort Meade Alliance and the Maryland Chamber of Commerce,  
20 or similar organizations; and

21 (ii) four members who are familiar with heritage language  
22 programs and who are members of ethnic community groups; ~~and~~

23 ~~(8)~~ (9) the following three members as representatives of the University  
24 System of Maryland:

25 (i) one representative of the National Foreign Language  
26 Center; and

27 (ii) two other members to be designated by the Chancellor of the  
28 University System of Maryland; and

29 (10) one member who is a representative of Maryland community  
30 colleges, appointed by the Maryland Association of Community Colleges.

31 (e) ~~The Task Force shall elect a chair from among its members.~~

1           (c)    The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House shall jointly  
2 select the chair of the Task Force from among its members.

3           (d)    The State Department of Education shall provide staff for the Task Force.

4           (e)    A member of the Task Force:

5               (1)    may not receive compensation as a member of the Task Force; but

6               (2)    is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard  
7 State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

8           (f)    The Task Force shall:

9               (1)    study methods of advancing and preserving heritage language  
10 skills in Maryland;

11              (2)    consult with educators and other experts in the field of world  
12 language training and development;

13              (3)    review and identify the best practices of heritage language  
14 programs that are being or will be conducted by government, schools, community  
15 groups, religious groups, and ethnic groups in the State, across the U.S., and  
16 internationally;

17              (4)    compile data on the number of actual and potential heritage  
18 language speakers in Maryland;

19              (5)    develop a process to identify priority heritage languages that is  
20 flexible enough to meet current and future national security and international  
21 business requirements;

22              (6)    consider new, cost-effective, and innovative ways to encourage and  
23 facilitate heritage language learning while also encouraging new citizens of the U.S. to  
24 learn and master English; and

25              (7)    recommend actions and programs that ensure maximum  
26 preservation of heritage language skills and identify measures of success for each.

27           (g)    On or before January 1, 2009, the Task Force shall report its findings and  
28 recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State  
29 Government Article, the General Assembly.

30           (h)    The Task Force shall continue to advise the Governor and the General  
31 Assembly on the implementation of its recommendations until this Act is abrogated  
32 and of no further force and effect.

1           SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
2 July 1, 2008. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and 1 month and, at the  
3 end of July 31, 2009, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this  
4 Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

Approved:

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Governor.

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Speaker of the House of Delegates.

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President of the Senate.