

SENATE BILL 506

P1

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CF HB 610

By: **Senators Rosapepe, Colburn, Kelley, Lenett, and Madaleno**

Introduced and read first time: February 1, 2008

Assigned to: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

A BILL ENTITLED

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

14 Preamble

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

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

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

23 WHEREAS, Since business partners in Maryland's top foreign export markets
24 speak over a dozen different languages, including Arabic, Spanish, German, Italian,
25 French, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, better command of those and other

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 international trading languages is essential to furthering commerce and enhancing
2 Maryland's economic health; 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 following eight members, appointed by the Secretary of
15 Education:

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

19 (ii) four members who are familiar with heritage language
20 programs and who are members of ethnic community groups;

21 (8) the following three members as representatives of the University
22 System of Maryland:

23 (i) one representative of the National Foreign Language Center
24 at the University of Maryland; and

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

27 (9) one member who is a representative of Maryland community
28 colleges, appointed by the Maryland Association of Community Colleges.

29 (c) The Task Force shall elect a chair from among its members.

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

31 (e) A member of the Task Force:

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

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

4 (f) The Task Force shall:

5 (1) study methods of advancing and preserving heritage language
6 skills in Maryland;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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