

SENATE BILL 506

P1

8lr2047
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

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

Senate action: Adopted

Read second time: March 20, 2008

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

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, Since business partners in Maryland's top foreign export markets
4 speak over a dozen different languages, including Arabic, Spanish, German, Italian,
5 French, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, better command of those and other
6 international trading languages is essential to furthering commerce and enhancing
7 Maryland's economic health; and

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

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

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

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

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

25 WHEREAS, Among the State's heritage language speakers, many are fluent in
26 languages of high interest for national security, defense, business, and trade
27 industries, including more than 12,000 speakers of Persian, nearly 9,000 speakers of
28 Urdu, more than 8,000 speakers of Arabic, nearly 49,000 speakers of Chinese, nearly
29 34,000 speakers of Korean, nearly 15,000 speakers of Hindi, and more than 19,000
30 speakers of Russian; and

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

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

36 WHEREAS, Because the United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed
37 2008 the International Year of Languages, promoting diversity and international

1 understanding worldwide, it is a particularly good time to make full use of the many
2 and varied language resources in our State; now, therefore,

3 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
4 MARYLAND, That:

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

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

8 (1) one member of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President
9 of the Senate;

10 (2) one member of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of
11 the House;

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

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

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

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

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

20 ~~(7)~~ (8) the following eight members, appointed by the Secretary of
21 Education:

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

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

27 ~~(8)~~ (9) the following three members as representatives of the University
28 System of Maryland:

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

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

1 ~~(9)~~ (10) one member who is a representative of Maryland community
2 colleges, appointed by the Maryland Association of Community Colleges.

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

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

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

7 (e) A member of the Task Force:

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

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

11 (f) The Task Force shall:

12 (1) study methods of advancing and preserving heritage language
13 skills in Maryland;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Approved:

Governor.

President of the Senate.

Speaker of the House of Delegates.